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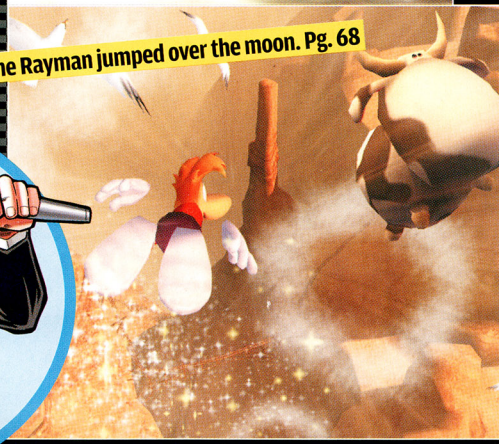

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Quickly—this way! I think I see my T-shirt!

NINTENDO POWER

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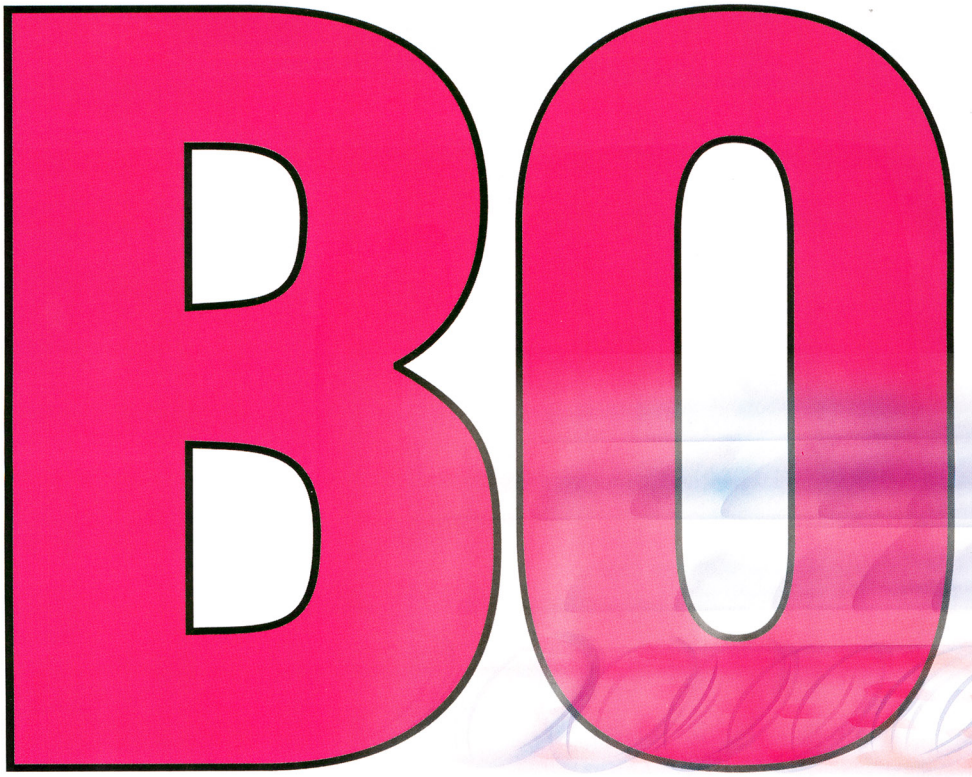

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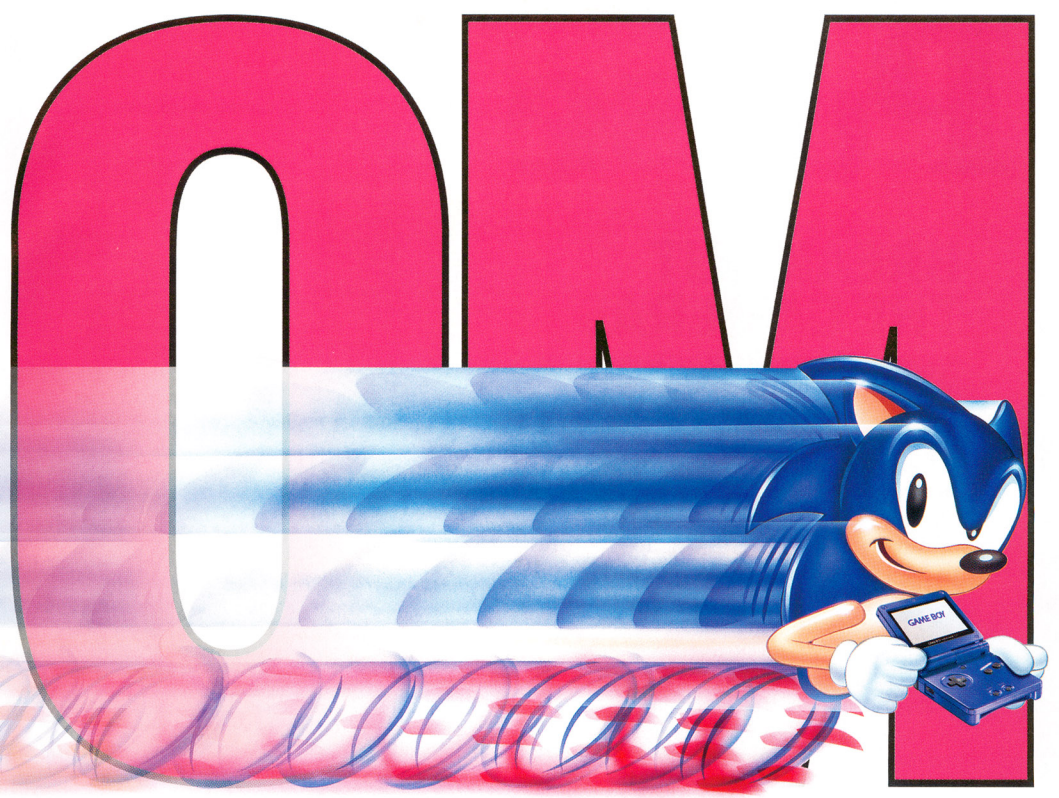

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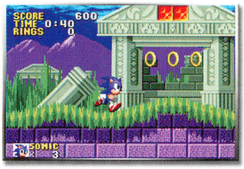

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Pulse

BREAK OUT THE CAMERAS

Over the past several months you may have noticed photos of happy, well-groomed people playing Wii in most Wii-related Nintendo Power articles, and you'll see them sprinkled throughout this month's expansive Wii launch coverage. You may be wondering who they are, why they are so happy, and why NP is showing them to you. Let's set the record straight. These folks aren't your dedicated NP staffers. We are far too pasty, grizzled, and bleary-eyed from all-night gaming sessions, unceasing deadline pressures, and diets dangerously low in health-sustaining nutrients to qualify for such beauty shots. In fact, these people were hired by Nintendo to model the satisfaction that players will experience when they play Wii. Now, before you get all riled up and accuse us of faking photos, keep in mind that models are real people; do they not bleed when you cut them and squeal when you back over them in your SUV? And these models liked playing Wii almost as much as they liked looking good while playing Wii! In fact, almost everyone who plays Wii likes it, and focus-group tests indicate that people also enjoy watching others playing Wii. This suggests that Wii provides a fundamentally new experience. Before Wii, you never saw active, happy models playing video games because there would have been nothing to show except their attractive twitching thumbs, and our extensive testing indicates that no matter how attractive thumbs are, practically nobody enjoys watching them twitch. Of course, what we'd really like to show is our readers playing Wii. So break out the cameras!

Scott Pelland
Managing Editor

LETTERS

SENT TO THE BRIG

I recently read in an earlier issue of yours that the *Captain N* TV show will be coming to DVD, and I'm ecstatic about this. You claimed it will be on DVD by the end of 2006, but I've heard from another source that your information is outdated and it won't be on DVD until early 2007 due to the resolving of some rights issues. Is this true?

Taylor C.
via the Internet

It appears so. Shout! Factory, the distributor of the box set, confirms that you can expect to see the compilation in stores on February 13, 2007.

THE VOICE OF REASON

I have the greatest idea—you guys would be the best on a podcast! It would be so fun to listen to you guys discuss and debate Nintendo news and games! There would be so many people who would listen! Please do this, because it would be awesome!

Koner S.
via the Internet

We'd love to wax intellectual about games and such, but time constraints prohibit us from doing it regularly. Besides, Steve T.'s voice is like nails on a chalkboard.

BUT ARE YOU THE BEST?

How would someone find out about gaming tournaments in his/her area? I really want to see if I'm any good at the games I love.

GardevoirChris
via the Internet

We'll stay on the lookout for nationwide tournaments and keep you posted in the Community section. As for local competitions, that seems like a great idea for starting a website of your own.

THE FINAL ANSWER

I've noticed a small error. In the the last question of the Power Quiz in volume 208 you asked which game had a Final Fantasy guest appearance, of course being Culex from Super Mario RPG. But although the music from his scenes was all from FF IV, Culex was never actually in any Final Fantasy.

Erich W.
via the Internet

Maybe guest appearance wasn't the right phrase—Culex was presented in Super Mario RPG as a character from the Final Fantasy universe, but he wasn't specifically a character from a previous Final Fantasy game.

CURSES; FOILED AGAIN

With Shaun Alexander being injured, it looks like the Madden curse has taken another victim. The developers of Madden have got to start leaving the game cover blank before they completely destroy the NFL.

Luigilunatic1
via the Internet

As proud fans of the NFC-champion Seattle Seahawks, we feel particularly stung by the Madden curse. Why, oh why, couldn't Rex Grossman have been on the cover instead?

MINUS THE STRETCHY ARMS

I have noticed that Chris Shepperd, one of your review writers, sort of looks like Mr. Fantastic from the Fantastic Four cartoon. Is that his secret identity?

Stephen M.
via the Internet

You may be onto something. The combination of white sideburns and superior intellect make him a dead ringer for the Marvel superhero.

WELL, YOU'RE HALF RIGHT

I was looking on Wii.com, and it said that Super Mario Galaxy is coming out for launch and Galaxy is a working title. Am I hallucinating this or is this true? Also, why does everyone like to inflict bodily pain on Chris Shepperd!? In my opinion, you're jealous of his good looks and writing talent.

Solidpit
via the Internet

Regarding your first comment, you're hallucinating—Super Mario Galaxy has always been planned for sometime in 2007. As for your second comment, you're not hallucinating—Chris Shepperd is indeed fantastically handsome.

WHADDYA MEAN WE'VE BEEN CANCELED?

This is total crap! I can't believe that they're going to cancel production of Super Smash Bros. Brawl! They are going to do this just to make a game of the movie *Happy Feet*! Who in their right mind would buy this game?!? I almost got sick when I found this out. I hope you actually take this seriously (since I know you probably won't). So someone should do something about this. I am

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also a Dragon Ball Z fan but I don't really care about it anymore!

Brett U.
via the Internet

We weren't exactly sure how to respond to these wildly false allegations until we got to the last sentence; then it all made sense. You're one of . . . them.

THE JIG IS UP

I love my Nintendo DS, and most of the games that have come out for it rock. My favorite game is Zookeeper DS, but I have a question: Is there any way you can reset the game to factory release condition (with the high scores erased)? My own high scores are driving me nuts and I can't find any help anywhere or from anyone on how to return them to zero. Thanks.

Daniel K.
via the Internet

Your own high scores, huh? Your big brother is gonna let you have it when he finds out you tried to erase his high scores. For his sake, there doesn't seem to be any way to erase the evidence of his domination.

IT'S SPELLED P•U•L•S•E

What does it take to be in the pules.

Copycat
via the Internet

There are two ways. Either write something relevant about games or Nintendo Power, and use proper punctuation and spelling, or do none of that so horrifically that we find a way to make fun of you. (You chose the latter.)

SWEATIN' TO THE OLDIES

Gaming is one of my few hobbies in life (sometimes it borders on obsession), but I also have other interests. I like being athletic and moving around. I love movement, from boxing to Tai Chi to Jungle Beat; life is a lot more fun when you're involved in some way.

That said, the Wii has me in a frenzy for a renewal of Nintendo's pugilistic series, Punch-Out!! This game still holds its own against every other boxing game ever made. I can't help but imagine a new Punch-Out!! built around the Wii motion control. In articles I've read online (or even in Point/CounterPoint in Volume 208), someone complains about getting tired playing the Wii, as if a few minutes of movement might be detrimental to their health. Even Miyamoto has said that "swinging the sword" is just more fun; who cares if you're sweating? You never know; the Wii could get people in shape and start a fitness craze! Remember the success DDR had? Some people like movement, so along with my request of a new Punch-Out!! please don't shy away from games where people might get tired. If your arms get tired after four hours of playing Wii Punch-Out!! then maybe you should take a break.

Joe Boxer
via the Internet

After playing games like Wii Sports and WarioWare: Smooth Moves!, we can attest that you'll definitely have the opportunity to get your heart rate going. Or . . .

I was just wondering about some of the features of the Wii controller. Let's say you're coming home from a long day at school and you're really tired. Is there anything on the Wii controller that makes it so you don't have to move around so much?

Max G.
via the Internet

. . . you could wear a hole into your couch like our friend Max here. It's up to you.

STEP TOWARD THE LIGHT WORLD

If I told you I had two weeks to live, would you send me a copy of Twilight Princess?

Derek
via the Internet

From what we've seen, two weeks (minus shipping time) wouldn't be enough time to finish Twilight Princess. We'd hate to have you leave this world unfulfilled.

AT LEAST YOU DIDN'T SAY CHUCK NORRIS

Do you guys think we'll see any Power Rangers in Brawl? How about Dora?

Mr. Mario
via the Internet

Lucario would make an awesome Super Smash Bros. Brawl character. I mean, think it about it. It just makes sense.

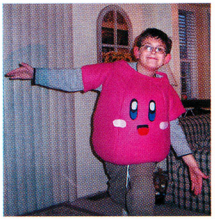
StFrancis2
via the Internet

We've been inundated with ideas for the next Brawl, but Dora the Explorer? Lucario? We should give out a monthly award for genius suggestions like these.

LIKE A BIG, PINK PUMPKIN

My son thought that your October issue should include Halloween costumes that featured Nintendo characters. I have included a picture of my son James in his Kirby Costume.

Jim
via the Internet



Thanks for sharing the darling photo, Jim. Oh, and when James starts dating, please remember to show this issue to all of his girlfriends. Thanks!

UPDATE THE RESUME

I have two questions for you guys. One, will there be a job opening to work at NP in 10-15 years from now? And two, is there any chance of NP relocating to somewhere in New York?

St. Jimmy
via the Internet

Considering Pete's passion for ocelot hunting and Chris S.'s love of crispy bacon, the odds are pretty good there'll be an opening. As for moving to New York, the rent would probably put us out on the street. Or, maybe we could stay at your parents' house for a few years?

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I just want to say that I am thoroughly appalled that fewer and fewer games are granting gamers the option of listening to dialogue in its original Japanese. I noticed this first with Sonic, my all-time favorite game series. Sonic Adventure and Sonic Adventure 2 both allowed gamers to choose between languages, thankfully, but Sonic Heroes abolished this ability for reasons unknown. The voice acting in Sonic Heroes was not bad, but the English localization was subpar. I am dying to see a return of the Japanese language selection in Sonic games and all other games that force us to hear the English dialogue. Japanese is a beautiful language, indeed.

Mikey R.
via the Internet

We hear ya, Mikey. More options are always preferable. But what we'd also like to see is greater commitment to English translation in games—it's something that would benefit all gamers equally.

THAT'S REAL GOLD, TOO

I got this Nintendo Power "Official Team Power" pin back in a 6th grade auction and I just recently found it again. I was wondering if it's worth anything or just another common thing.

Zac C.
via the Internet

Common?!? Are you kidding? Not only is it a rare piece of cheap NP memorabilia, but you're one of the lucky few to get one that was made upside down. Hold onto that little gem—it's priceless.

ALL KIDDING ASIDE

I have noticed that you make a joke out of a lot of e-mails when people are expecting a real answer. Some of us have limited internet access so we cannot look up our question online. I love how funny you make the jokes, and please don't stop doing it, but I would really like for some of the questions to be answered. Don't get me wrong, I mean, you guys are still the coolest people over 16 years old in the whole world, but sometimes we want answers!

K
via the Internet

Yeah, it's true. We tend toward making jokes in Pulse, but we give good information when we can. We'll try to select letters that merit better responses, as well.

WEATHER OR NOT

I think Konami should make a Lunar Knights game for Wii. There is so much that could work between Lunar Knights and Wii. Of course, they could make the game an FPS using the Wii remote, but they could also use the Wii Weather Channel info. Since Boktai and Lunar Knights focus around weather, it would be perfect. For example, If you were in a desert area in the game, they could get info from Africa, and if you were in a cold, snowy area, they could get info from Alaska.

Josh K.
via the Internet

That's truly an awesome idea, Josh. We're not yet sure what the capabilities of the Wii Channels are, but it's good to dream big.

THAT DIDN'T LAST LONG

I had a comment about a new gaming thing. I was wondering if Nintendo would start a Pokémon virtual reality game. You would have the helmet and you could take the Pokémon Game Boy Advance computer chips from all of the games and rearrange the programming to make it 3-D and make it virtual reality. If you think this is a good idea then please respond back to me if you do think it.

Laurie S.
via the Internet

Sorry, K. But our letter response karma went right out the window after we read Josh's fabulous vision.

WE'RE NOT SHRINKS, BUT . . .

I know it's kind of an old game, but a while ago I got hooked on Sonic Battle. My friend warned me the ending was sad, but when I beat the game and Emerl died, I cried all over my SP. Does that make me a baby?

Connor
via the Internet

The topic of crying seems to be a favorite in Pulse. We'll admit that games can get people pretty emotional, but sobbing over a handheld Sonic game takes it a little too far. Save the waterworks for Fire Emblem and Zelda.

RATED M FOR MA-MA

Last week I was sitting in my game room next to my brother playing a bit of Killer 7 (best game in the world, by the way—everyone go out and buy a copy, NOW!). I felt my throat getting a bit parched from blasting all those Smiles, so I went downstairs to get a glass of water. When I returned, my brother was playing Killer 7 and kicking butt at it as well! I managed to snap a photo before he saw me. I think he might be a bit under the "suggested age."

AS_Artimour
via the Internet

Scandalous!

JUST USE PROPER POSTAGE

My carrier pigeon is tired; do you think I could just use a Moogle to send all my letters to you guys?

Zero-Stuffy
via the Internet

PLEASE WRITE US:

pulse@nintendopower.com

Or via Moogle at:

Nintendo Power
PO Box 97033
Redmond, WA 98073-9733

NINTENDO POWER

THE FANTASTIC 37

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MOST WANTED

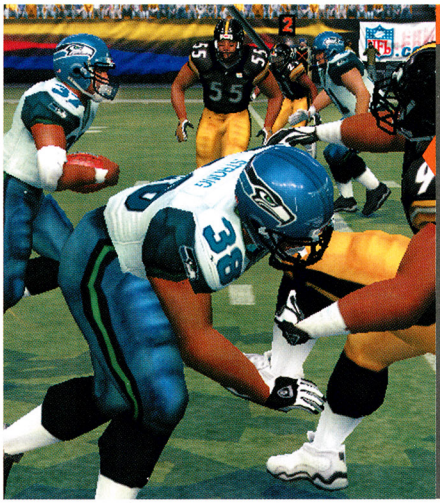
As voted on by the readers. Go to nintendo.com/mostwanted and let your voice be heard!

>Wii

1. The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess
2. Super Mario Galaxy
3. Metroid Prime 3: Corruption
4. Red Steel
5. Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers

>NINTENDO DS

1. The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass
2. Final Fantasy III
3. Yoshi's Island DS
4. Pokémon Ranger
5. Kirby: Squeak Squad



TOP SELLERS

>NINTENDO GAMECUBE

Madden rockets to the top of the charts, thus guaranteeing Shaun Alexander's debilitating injury. Gee, thanks, everyone.

1. Madden NFL 07
2. Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door
3. LEGO *Star Wars*
4. Naruto: Clash of Ninja
5. Super Smash Bros. Melee
6. Mario Kart: Double Dash
7. Cars
8. Teen Titans
9. Super Mario Sunshine
10. Star Fox: Assault

TOP SELLERS

>GAME BOY ADVANCE

Pokémon FireRed sneaks back onto the list, but we suspect a certain other Pokémon game will usurp its position.

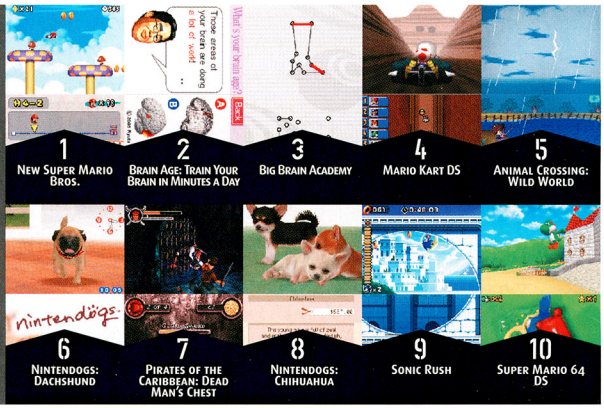
Dogz? Woof.

1. Super Mario Advance
2. Cars
3. Pokémon Emerald
4. Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest
5. Yoshi's Island: Super Mario Advance 3
6. Dogz
7. Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3
8. Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga
9. Monster House
10. Pokémon FireRed

TOP SELLERS

>NINTENDO DS

We know one blue hedgehog who's happy to be on the list again.



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(s06)

SUDA'S NEXT-GEN HEROES

WARIO GOES Wii

BIOWARE ON DS

TGS REPORT

DS Shows Off

As the DS continues to dominate Japanese sales charts, publishers shower love on the handheld at this year's Tokyo Game Show.

The 2006 Tokyo Game Show was one of the most heavily attended in the event's history. We braved the massive crowds to check out the latest DS developments. There were far too many games to list them all, but here are some highlights (all but two of which, you'll notice, came from Square Enix).

1 Though it wasn't playable, the most exciting DS game at the show was probably **Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings**. A spin-off of the recently released PlayStation 2 epic, Revenant Wings takes place prior to the events of Final Fantasy XII, and stars Vaan and Penelo during their more innocent days as air pirates. Little else is known about the game at this time, but series veteran Motomu Toriyama (who most recently helmed Final Fantasy X-2) will serve as writer and director.

2 Not to be left off the gravy train, Tetsuya Nomura and the Kingdom Hearts team are working on a new DS project entitled **It's a Wonderful World**. The demo on display was stylish and unorthodox, putting you in control of both its heroes simultaneously (one on each screen). While utilizing the bottom character's psychic abilities via the touch screen, you execute attacks with the top character by tapping the Control Pad in time with a series of on-screen prompts. It seemed as complex as it sounds, but we walked away very intrigued.

3 The next evolution of the Battle Network series, Capcom's **Mega Man Star Force** introduces a new lead character, 3-D battles, and a wide array of new multiplayer modes.

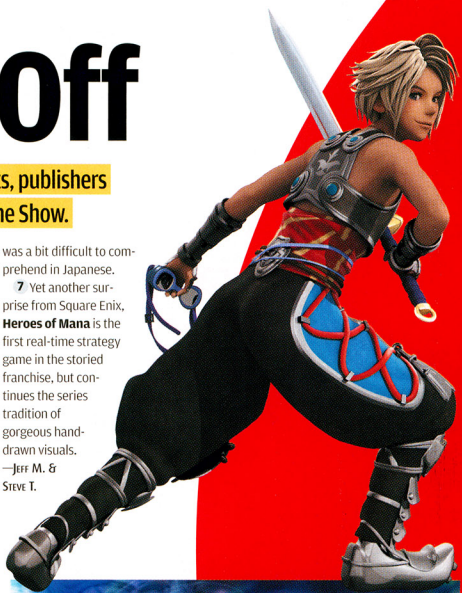
4 **Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker** impressed showgoers with its stunning cel-shaded visuals and addictive monster breeding.

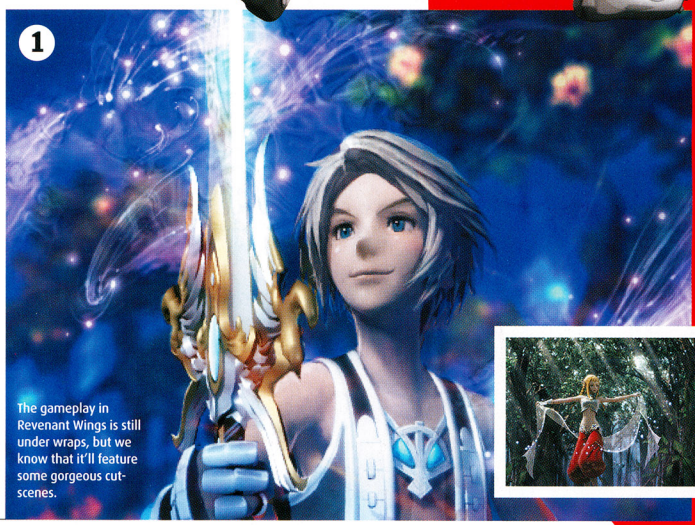
5 The bizarre **Chocobo and the Magic Picture Book** has you playing various minigames based on fairy tales to obtain pop-up cards. You'll then organize those cards into a deck and engage in duels.

6 Speaking of card games, **SNK vs. Capcom Card Fighters DS** (from SNK Playmore) was looking good, though it was a bit difficult to comprehend in Japanese.

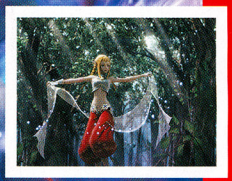
7 Yet another surprise from Square Enix, **Heroes of Mana** is the first real-time strategy game in the storied franchise, but continues the series tradition of gorgeous hand-drawn visuals.

—Jeff M. & Steve T.

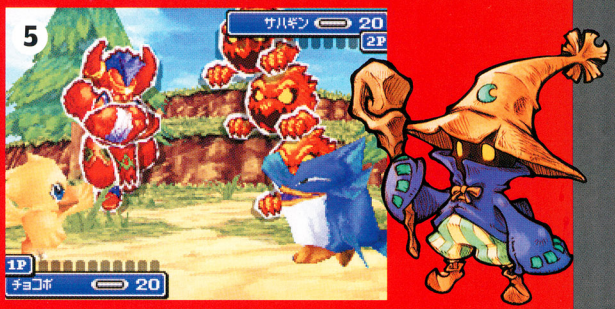




The gameplay in Revenant Wings is still under wraps, but we know that it'll feature some gorgeous cut-scenes.



The battles in Star Force place a much greater emphasis on the elemental system and eliminate the boundary between you and the enemy.



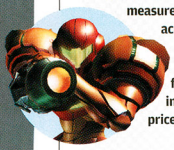
SNK vs. Capcom allows for all kinds of dream match-ups, like a robotic Zangief against the little girl from Twinkle Star Sprites.

BITE-SIZE NEWS

Collect the Bounty

First 4 Figures' Samus statue is revealed.

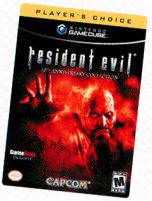
First 4 Figures, the company that acquired the license to produce Metroid ministatues, has unveiled its rendition of Samus in her Varia Suit. The statue measures 11 inches across the base, and is scheduled for release in December, priced at $99.99.



Evil Anniversary

Capcom to release value-priced Resident Evil compilation.

To celebrate 10 years of survival-horror, Capcom will offer a special GCN Player's Choice bundle that includes Resident Evil 0, Resident Evil, and Resident Evil 4 for an MSRP of $39.99. The compilation will be available only at GameStop starting October 24th.



The Axe Man Cometh

Guitar Hero ready to rock on Wii?

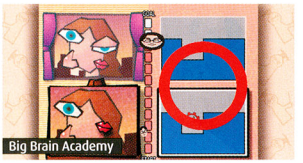
During a recent teleconference, Activision CEO Robert Kotick commented that Guitar Hero would see release on "every significant new platform."

MORE NEWS FROM JAPAN!

Wii Megatons

Nintendo makes blockbuster Wii announcements at its recent Tokyo event, and the makers of Killer 7 unveil their latest creation.

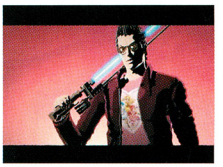
Publishers Open the Wii Floodgates



At a recent event in Tokyo, Nintendo and its licensed publishers announced dozens of new Wii titles for the Japanese market. Though some of them will probably never see the light of day on these shores (we're looking at you, Densha de Go!), quite a few should be of major interest to US gamers. Among the most noteworthy titles revealed were Mario Party 8, Big Brain Academy, Kirby, Super Paper Mario, and Animal Crossing from Nintendo; Sword of Legendia and Pac-Man Carnival from Namco Bandai; Devil Kings and Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles from Capcom; Samurai Warriors Wave from Koei; and Bleach Wii from Sega. The list also included a "gun-shooting" game from Sega (please be House of the Dead!), as well as a couple of untitled "action-adventure" games and an RPG from Konami. Finally, as part of a video segment featuring testimonials from some of the big names developing for the console, former Square Enix game director Yasumi Matsuno (Final Fantasy XII, Ogre Battle) stated that he's currently working on a Wii title with an unnannounced studio.

To check out movies from the event (including about three seconds of Resident Evil footage), go to www.nintendo.co.jp/wii/topics/wii_preview/index.html. Please be advised, however, that both the site and the video clips are entirely in Japanese. —Steve T.

Grasshopper's Heroes Look Killer



Goichi Suda (better known as Suda 51), the president of Grasshopper Manufacture and creative mastermind behind Killer 7, has finally started to pull back the curtain on his new Wii project. Entitled Heroes, the game boasts a cel-shaded style similiar to its predecessor (though it looks even slicker in motion), and a storyline that once again deals with assassins. You play a professional killer who wields a lightsaber-esque blade and is determined to become the world's top-ranked assassin by eliminating the competition. Expect lots of over-the-top violence and trippy narrative. —Steve T.

NEENER NEENER

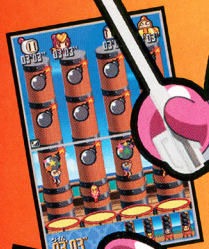
Where's Wario?

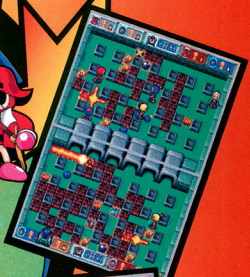
We get the skinny on the latest release from Nintendo's hefty antihero.

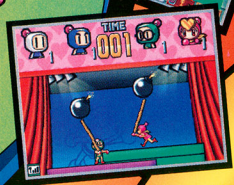
We've got some good news, and we got some bad news. The good news is that we've confirmed when WarioWare: Smooth Moves! will be released for the Wii. The bad news is that it won't be on store shelves until January 15, 2007. Hey, it's still good news for us—we get to spend the next three months taunting you by saying how much fun we're having with the pre-release versions. —Chris S.

For everyone who glanced at this screenshot and thought we were revealing information on a Wii Animal Crossing game . . . gotcha!

BOO-YAH!







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BioWare Anywhere

Dan Tudge
Project Director,
BioWare Handheld
Game Group

The acclaimed RPG studio announces the creation of a new handheld division, and reveals that work is already underway on its first DS project.

Best known for epics like Baldur's Gate and *Star Wars*: Knights of the Old Republic, BioWare has decided to bring its considerable talents to bear on the portable market, starting with a new title for the DS. To learn more about this exciting development, we spoke with Dan Tudge, the man in charge of the company's new handheld group. —STEVE T.

Nintendo Power: Why is now the right time for BioWare to get into handheld development?
Dan Tudge: We've always been a fan of handheld games and we've had lots of ideas we've been kicking around for a while. This new generation of handheld technology makes a lot of those ideas possible, so we were excited to finally get a chance to make those ideas a reality.

NP: Why choose the DS for your first project?
DT: It was a tough decision since the DS and the PSP are both amazing platforms, but ultimately we felt that the qualities of the DS were a better fit for this particular debut project. Also, the DS offered an opportunity to create some truly remarkable innovations in handheld RPGs, which was a big attraction for BioWare.

NP: How long has the project been in development, and how big is the team working on it?
DT: Initial discussions about the project began late last fall, but we started talking seriously about it in the spring of this year. We're still at the beginning of the project so the team is still quite small, but the core team will roughly be about 12 people, which is slightly large for a DS team, but it's a BioWare title so it will definitely need the resources!

NP: Is the game based on a previous BioWare property, or is it something completely new?
DT: That secret has to stay in our vault for now, so unfortunately I can't say. But BioWare is committed to creating the best story- and character-driven games in the world, so you can be sure this new handheld game will be true to that standard of quality.

NP: Handhelds don't typically see many story-driven epics, particularly from Western developers. Why do you think that is, and do you see this as an opportunity for BioWare to fill a void?
DT: North Americans tend to use their handhelds in a more intermittent and casual fashion, often with long periods of downtime, whereas the Asian consumers are more diligent about consistently picking up their handhelds every day. As a result you often see North American developers shying away from epic stories for fear of losing their audience during the downtime. At BioWare we certainly feel that there are ways to overcome this; however, the most likely scenario is that players simply won't be able to put our game down!

NP: Will the game include any sort of online component?
DT: That's another detail we aren't quite ready to discuss just yet. We think the Nintendo DS has terrific online capabilities which we'd love to take advantage of, but only if it's right for our game.

NP: How does your overall approach to handheld development differ from console development?
DT: There are the obvious examples of shorter development cycles and smaller team size, but where the real differences lie is in the way the consumer plays a handheld RPG. This fundamentally changes the way you approach design. Often, developers simply port the console version of a product to a handheld with minor changes. At BioWare, this game will be built from the ground up with the DS handheld experience in mind.

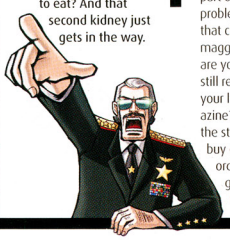
NP: What are some of your favorite handheld titles, and have any of them influenced the development of your new game?
DT: The team and I have played a ton of games, so influences can be found everywhere. At BioWare we have an outstanding track record, so the high bar we set for ourselves is often the biggest influence of all.

There are so many handheld games I have enjoyed that it's very hard to pick any particular one. That said, the Zelda games on GB and GBA have always captivated me, so I am looking forward to the release of Phantom Hourglass.

NP: Do you have a general time frame for when the game might be released?
DT: Probably at least a year out from now, but we haven't locked down a specific timeline yet.

DON'T-MISS Calendar

November is always the best time of year to be a gamer, but it sure does a number on the ol' pocketbook. But hey, who needs to eat? And that second kidney just gets in the way.



11-6
And that's an order!
If you don't buy **Elite Beat Agents**, you're part of the problem. Is that clear, maggot? What are you doing still reading your little magazine? Run to the store and buy (or pre-order) the game! NOW!

11-7
Feeling blue? Go 'hog wild.
Say what you will about Sonic's modern-day adventures, but his original game is one of the all-time great platformers. Sega marks the game's 15th anniversary with GBA port **Sonic the Hedgehog Genesis**.

11-13
The return of the dino-rider.
Speaking of all-time great platformers, Super NES classic Yoshi's Island finally gets a sequel with **Yoshi's Island DS**. To learn more about the baby-hopping hootenanny, check out our preview on page 78.

11-14
A long-lost fantasy.
Sixteen years after the release of the original Famicom game, **Final Fantasy III** finally comes to North America in the form of a radically upgraded DS remake. Now how about a similar treatment for Final Fantasy VI?

11-19
A new generation begins, and a legendary hero returns.
In case you hadn't heard, Nintendo has a new console coming out. On November 19th, **Wii** arrives in stores alongside a massive launch lineup led by **The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess**.

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4 KIDS TV

BANDAI NAMCO Games

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GAME WATCH FORECAST

There's a lot of red on this month's forecast as we finally add the 50-plus announced Wii titles to the list. If you put on a pair of 3-D glasses, the words will punch you in the face!

Wii

The Ant Bully	Midway	●●○
Avatar: The Last Airbender	THQ	●●○
Barnyard	THQ	●●○
Battalion Wars 2	Nintendo	●●○
Big Brain Academy	Nintendo	●●○
Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WW II	Ubisoft	●●○
Blitz: The League	Midway	●●○
Bust-a-Move Revolution®	Majesco	●○○
Call of Duty 3	Activision	●●○
Cars	THQ	●●○
Chicken Little: Ace in Action	Buena Vista	●●○
Disaster: Day of Crisis	Nintendo	●●○
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 2	Atari	●●○
Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors	Square Enix	●●○
Elebits	Konami	●●○
Excite Truck	Nintendo	●●○
Far Cry: Vengeance	Ubisoft	●●○
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	●●○
Fire Emblem®	Nintendo	●●○
The Godfather	EA	●○○
The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy	Midway	●●○
GT Pro Series	Ubisoft	●●○
Happy Feet	Midway	●●○
Harvest Moon Wii®	Natsume	●●○
Ice Age 2	Vivendi	●●○
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Nintendo	●●○
Madden NFL 07	EA	●●○
Mario Strikers: Charged	Nintendo	●●○
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	Activision	●●○
Medal of Honor: Airborne	EA	●●○
Meet the Robinsons	Buena Vista	●●○
Metal Slug Anthology	SNK	●●○
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption	Nintendo	●●○
Monster 4x4: World Circuit	Ubisoft	●●○
Mortal Kombat: Armageddon	Midway	●●○
Need for Speed Carbon	EA	●●○
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure	Namco Bandai	●●○
Open Season	Ubisoft	●●○
Project H.A.M.M.E.R.	Nintendo	●●○
Rampage: Total Destruction	Midway	●●○
Rapala Tournament Fishing	Activision	●●○
Rayman Raving Rabbids	Ubisoft	●●○
Red Steel	Ubisoft	●●○
Sonic and the Secret Rings	Sega	●●○
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab	THQ	●●○
SSX®	EA	●○○
Super Mario Galaxy	Nintendo	●●○
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Blitz	Sega	●●○
Super Smash Bros. Brawl	Nintendo	●●○
Super Swing Golf	Tecmo	●●○
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles®	Ubisoft	●○○
Tiger Woods PGA Tour®	EA	●○○
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent	Ubisoft	●●○
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam	Activision	●●○
Trauma Center: Second Opinion	Atlus	●●○
WarioWare: Smooth Moves	Nintendo	●●○
Wii Sports	Nintendo	●●○
World Series of Poker	Activision	●●○

NINTENDO DS

A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	●●○
Arthur and the Invisibles	Atari	●●○
Asphalt: Urban GT 2	Ubisoft	●●○
Avatar: The Last Airbender	THQ	●●●
Barbie in the 12 Dancing Princesses	Activision	●●○
Bionicle Heroes	Eidos	●●○
Bomberman Land Touch!	Atlus	●●○
Brain Boost: Beta Wave	Majesco	●●○
Brain Boost: Gamma Wave	Majesco	●●○
Bratz: Forever Diamonds	THQ	●●●
Cake Mania	Majesco	●●○
California Games	System 3	●●○
Cartoon Network Racing	American Game Factory	●○○
Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin	Konami	●●○
Catz	Ubisoft	●●○
Charlotte's Web	Sega	●●○
Chibi-Robo: Park Patrol	Nintendo	●●○
Chicken Little: Ace in Action	Buena Vista	●●●
Children of Mana	Nintendo	●●●
Chronos Twin	Lexicon	●●○
Code Lyoko	American Game Factory	●○○
Custom Robo Arena	Nintendo	●●○
Danny Phantom: Urban Jungle	THQ	●●○
Death, Jr. and the Science Fair of Doom	Konami	●●○
Digimon World DS	Namco Bandai	●●○
DK King of Swing DS®	Nintendo	●●○
Dogz	Ubisoft	●●○
DS Air®	Nintendo	●●○
Dynasty Warriors®	Koei	●●○
Elite Beat Agents	Nintendo	●●●
Eragon	Vivendi	●●○
Etrian Odyssey	Atlus	●●○
Europa Universalis II	Pocket PC	●●○
F-24 Stealth Fighter	Majesco	●●○
FIFA 07	EA	●●●
Final Fantasy III	Square Enix	●●○
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates	Square Enix	●●○
Flushed Away	D3PA	●●●
Fullmetal Alchemist: Dual Sympathy	Destineer	●●○
Garfield: A Tale of Two Kitties	American Game Factory	●●○
GoPets	Konami	●●○
Gunpey DS	Namco Bandai	●●●
Hamsterz Life	Ubisoft	●●○
Hannah Montana	Buena Vista	●●○
Happy Feet	Midway	●●○
Horsez	Ubisoft	●●○
Hotel Dusk: Room 215	Nintendo	●●○
Impossible Mission	System 3	●●○
Indiana Jones 2007®	LucasArts	●○○
Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja	Atlus	●●○
Justice League Heroes	Warner Bros.	●●●
Kim Possible: Global Gemini	Buena Vista	●●○
Kirby: Squeak Squad	Nintendo	●●○
Legend of the River King®	Natsume	●○○
The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords®	Nintendo	●○○
The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	Nintendo	●●○
Lionel Trains: On Track	Destination	●●○
The Little Mermaid: Ariel's Undersea Adventure	Buena Vista	●●○
Lost in Blue 2	Konami	●○○
Lunar Knights	Konami	●●○
Mage Knight: Destiny's Soldier	Namco Bandai	●●●
Magical Starsign	Nintendo	●●●
March of the Penguins	Destination	●●○
Marvel Trading Card Game	Konami	●●○
Meet the Robinsons	Buena Vista	●○○
Mega Man Star Force	Capcom	●●○
Meteos: Disney Edition	Buena Vista	●○○
Micro Machines V4	Codemasters	●●○
Monster Bomber	Majesco	●●○
Monster Rancher	Tecmo	●○○
Moonlight Fables®	Majesco	●○○
My Frogger Toy Trials	Konami	●●○
Nacho Libre	Majesco	●●●
Nanostray 2	TBD	●●○
Need for Speed: Carbon	EA	●●○
Nicktoons Unite: Battle for Volcano Island	THQ	●●●
Nintendogs: Dalmatian	Nintendo	●●○
One Piece	Namco Bandai	●●○
Over the Hedge: Hammy Goes Nuts	Activision	●●●
Panzer Tactics DS®	CDV Software	●●○
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All	Capcom	●●○
Pokémon Ranger	Nintendo	●●●
Princess Natasha: Student, Secret Agent, Princess	Destination	●●○
Puzzle de Harvest Moon	Natsume	●●○
Quad Desert Fury 2	Majesco	●○○
Rayman Raving Rabbids	Ubisoft	●●○
Scooby-Doo!: Who's Watching Who?	THQ	●●●
Scurge: Hive	SouthPeak	●●○
Shrek Smash and Crash Racing	Activision	●●○
The Sims 2 Pets	EA	●●○
SNK vs. Capcom Card Fighters DS	SNK	●●○
Spectrobes	Buena Vista	●●○
Spider-Man: Battle for New York	Activision	●●○
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab	THQ	●●●
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	Bethesda	●●●
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	Ubisoft	●●○
Steel Horizon	Konami	●●○
Strawberry Shortcake: Strawberryland Games	American Game Factory	●●○
Superman Returns: The Videogame	EA	●●○
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 2	Namco Bandai	●●○
That's So Raven: Psychic on the Scene	Buena Vista	●●●
Tom and Jerry Tales	Eidos	●●●
Tomb Raider: Legend	Eidos	●●●
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam	Activision	●●○
Top Gear: Downforce	Kemco	●●○
Totally Spies! 2: Undercover	Atari	●●○
Touch Detective	Atlus	●●●
Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames	●○○
Ultimate Card Games	Telegames	●●○
Ultimate Pocket Games	Telegames	●○○
Winning Eleven: Pro Evolution Soccer 2007	Konami	●●○
Winx Club: The Quest for the Codex	Konami	●●○
Xiaolin Showdown	Konami	●●○
Yoshi's Island 2	Nintendo	●●○
Yu-Gi-Oh! GX: Spirit Summoner	Konami	●●○

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

Avatar: The Last Airbender	THQ	●●●
Backyard Baseball 2007	Atari	●●○
Backyard Basketball 2007	Atari	●○○
Backyard Football 2007	Atari	●○○
Bionicle Heroes	Eidos	●●○
Bratz: Forever Diamonds	THQ	●●●
FIFA 07	EA	●●●
Flushed Away	D3PA	●●●
Foodfight!	Global Star	●●○
The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy	Midway	●●○
Happy Feet	Midway	●●○
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Nintendo	●●○
Mini-Golf Mayhem	Crave	●○○
Naruto: Clash of Ninja 2	Tomy/D3PA	●●●
Need for Speed: Carbon	EA	●●○
Nicktoons Unite: Battle for Volcano Island	THQ	●●●
The Sims 2 Pets	EA	●●○
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab	THQ	●●●
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent	Ubisoft	●●○
Tomb Raider: Legend	Eidos	●●○
World Championship Poker	Crave	●●○
Zatch Bell!: Mamodo Fury	Namco Bandai	●●○

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Arthur and the Invisibles	Atari	●●○
ATV: Thunder Ridge Riders	Destination	●●○
Avatar: The Last Airbender	THQ	●●●
Barbie Diaries: High School Mystery	Activision	●●○
Barbie in the 12 Dancing Princesses	Activision	●●○
Battle B-Daman: Fire Spirits!	Atlus	●●●
Bionicle Heroes	Eidos	●●○
Bratz: Forever Diamonds	THQ	●●●
Camp Lazlo: Leaky Lake Games	Crave	●●○
Charlotte's Web	Sega	●●○
Danny Phantom: Urban Jungle	THQ	●●○
Disney Princess: Royal Adventure	Buena Vista	●●○
Dogz Fashion	Ubisoft	●●○
Dora's World Adventure	Global Star	●●○
Eragon	Vivendi	●●○
F-24 Stealth Fighter	Majesco	●●○
Family Feud	Global Star	●●○
FIFA 07	EA	●●●
Final Fantasy V Advance	Nintendo	●●●
Final Fantasy VI Advance	Nintendo	●●○
Flushed Away	D3PA	●●●
Foodfight!	Global Star	●●○
Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends	Crave	●●○
The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy	Midway	●●○
Happy Feet	Midway	●●○
Hardcore Pool	Telegames	●●○
Harlem Globetrotters: World Tour	Destination	●●○
Hot Wheels: All Out	Destination	●●○
Hugo: Bukkazoom	Namco Bandai	●●○
Juka & The Monophonic Menace	SouthPeak	●●○
Justice League Heroes: The Flash	Warner Bros.	●●●
Koala Brothers: Outback Adventures	American Game Factory	●●○
Legend of the River King Advance	Natsume	●●○
Little Einsteins	Buena Vista	●●○
The Little Mermaid: Magic in Two Kingdoms	Buena Vista	●●●
March of the Penguins	Destination	●●○
Meet the Robinsons	Buena Vista	●○○
Mega Man Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●○
Metal Slug	SNK	●●○
Monster Truck Mayhem	Destination	●●○
My Little Pony: Crystal Princess—The Runaway Rainbow	THQ	●○○
Naruto: Ninja Council 2	Tomy/D3PA	●●●
Need for Speed: Carbon	EA	●●○
Nicktoons: Battle for Volcano Island	THQ	●●●
Over the Hedge: Hammy Goes Nuts	Activision	●●●
Pirate Battle	Orbital	●●○
The Proud Family	Disney	●●○
Santa Claus Saves the Earth	Telegames	●●○
The Santa Clause 3	Buena Vista	●●●
Scurge: Hive	SouthPeak	●●○
Shrek Smash and Crash Racing	Activision	●●○
The Sims 2 Pets	EA	●●○
Sonic the Hedgehog Genesis	Sega	●●○
Spider-Man: Battle for New York	Activision	●●○
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab	THQ	●●●
Strawberry Shortcake: Sweet Dreams	Majesco	●●○
The Suite Life of Zack & Cody	Buena Vista	●○○
Summon Night: Swordcraft Story 2	Atlus	●●●
Super Robot Monkey Team Hyperforce Go!	Disney	●○○
Super Shrink: Original Generation 2	Atlus	●●○
Superman Returns: The Videogame	EA	●●○
Teen Titans 2	Majesco	●●○
Tom and Jerry Tales	Eidos	●●●
Tomb Raider: Legend	Eidos	●●●
Tonka on the Job	THQ	●○○
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam	Activision	●●○
Totally Spies! 2: Undercover	Atari	●●○
Ultimate Pocket Games	Telegames	●○○
Ultimate Puzzle Games	Telegames	●●○
Ultimate Table Games	Telegames	●●○
Unfabulous	THQ	●○○
Uno 52	Destination	●○○
Uno Freefall	Destination	●○○
VeggieTales: LarryBoy and the Bad Apple	Crave	●●○
Winx Club: The Quest for the Codex	Konami	●●○
W.I.T.C.H.	Buena Vista	●○○
World Poker Tour 2K6	2K Sports	●○○
World Reborn	Destination	●●○
X-Blades: Inline Skater	Crave	●●○
Xyanide	Playlogic	●○○
Yggdra Union	Atlus	●●○

° TENTATIVE TITLE

TASTY TIDBIT

Sugar Rush

Majesco's Cake Mania is runnin' wild on DS.

Cooking games are all the rage at Majesco. Following the acclaim of Cooking Mama, the company has revealed it'll be bringing Cake Mania to DS in early 2007. Based on the PC game of the same name, Cake Mania lets players use the touch screen to bake, frost, and decorate increasingly complex cakes as per customers' specifications.

Announced
In Development
Ready for Release

Game Title — Publisher ●●●

Game Title — Publisher ●●● — New games added to the list

DRAGON QUEST HEROES

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NO SPINE, JUST GUTS!

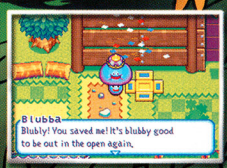
Rocket Slime attacks in this most action-packed adventure! Rescue kidnapped slimes. Collect a bajillion things. Destroy your friends in explosive player-vs.-player tank battles using the Nintendo DS wireless feature! And whatever you do, don't miss your chance to get into the most rampaging slime adventure ever!

9 out of 10
"...the wars between the tanks are exhilarating."
-Nintendo Power Vol. 208

"Rocket Slime is that rarest of breeds: a kids' game that completely rocks."
-Electronic Gaming Monthly

ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY GAME OF THE MONTH

OCT. 2006
DRAGON QUEST HEROES:
ROCKET SLIME



EVERYONE
Cartoon Violence
Comic Mischief
Use of Tobacco
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

NINTENDO DS™

SQUARE ENIX™

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SUPER SMASH BROS. Brawl

Wii SMASH FILES #05

WARIO

FIRST GAME APPEARANCE:
Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins - Game Boy (1992)

KNOWN FOR:
Greed, greed, greed

BIOGRAPHY:
Originally appearing as the end boss in one of Mario's quests, Wario is essentially Mario's villainous counterpart—lazy, greedy, selfish, and with a less-well-groomed 'stache. After being shown the error of his ways, Wario set off on adventures of his own (hoping to get rich quick, naturally) in which his bulk made him surprisingly resilient to the various hazards he encountered. He achieved his greatest success, however, by founding his own budget-minded software company. Wario's lust for riches may be matched only by his poor hygiene: his garlic breath and other gaseous emissions are especially potent.

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Six Transformations
The Ultimate Mega Man!

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EVERYONE
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Cartoon Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

Available September 2006

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NINTENDO DS.™

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CAPCOM®

Want more? Check out the huge list of Wii launch titles on page 58.

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Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin Pg. 37
Digimon World DS Pg. 44
Fullmetal Alchemist: Dual Sympathy Pg. 34
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Metroid Prime 3: Corruption Pg. 31
Polarium Advance Pg. 42
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice For All Pg. 36
Rayman Raving Rabbids Pg. 36
Sonic and the Secret Rings Pg. 34
Super Mario Galaxy Pg. 35
Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation 2 Pg. 44
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 2 Pg. 42
Top Gear Downforce Pg. 40

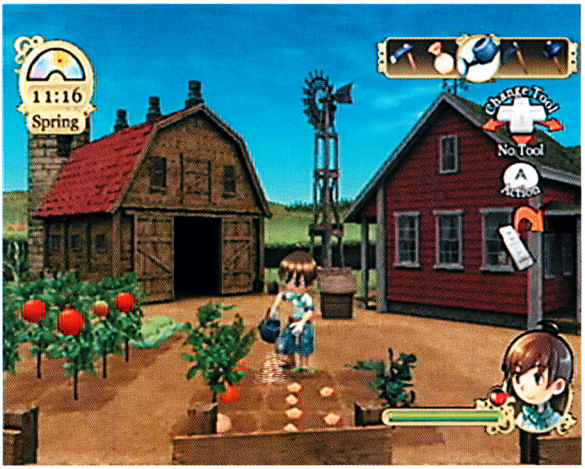
Calling All Farm Hands

> HARVEST MOON Wii

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: Nastume
DEVELOPER: Marvelous • RELEASE: Q4 2007

Harvest Moon's popular around these parts, so you can imagine our excitement to learn not only that the series' first next-gen installment would be exclusive to Wii, but that we could break the news of its North American release here. It's true—Harvest Moon Wii (known as Harvest Moon Heroes in Japan) is coming to North America late next year. The game is being built from the ground up for Wii, and will make obvious yet fun use of the Wii controller. You'll till soil, chop wood, and water plants by making appropriate motions with the remote. Details on the controls are still scarce, but we do know that Harvest Moon Wii will include a number of minigames created specifically for use with the unique controller.

The game's content will follow closely in the tradition of its predecessors. The setting this time around is an island on which a giant mystical tree has withered—it's up to you to work your farm, befriend the animals and locals, raise a family, and plant special seedlings alongside the Harvest Sprites—all to bring the giant tree back to life. Fan-favorite features will be abundant, including the ability to play as either a boy or a girl from the start. You'll also be able to change your character's clothes—a feature that fans have long begged for. The game is still early in development, and the list of features is not final—but Marvelous has some lofty goals, one of which is a new system that will allow your family members to assist you with your farm work. This is shaping up to be the most complete Harvest Moon experience ever—we'll keep you posted as details emerge. —Andy M.



Swing your Wii remote round and round. Yee haw!

Not the Same Ol' Samus

>METROID PRIME 3: CORRUPTION

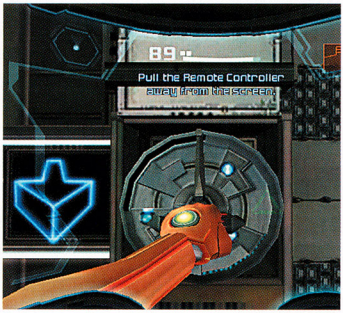
PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: Retro Studios • RELEASE: Winter 2007

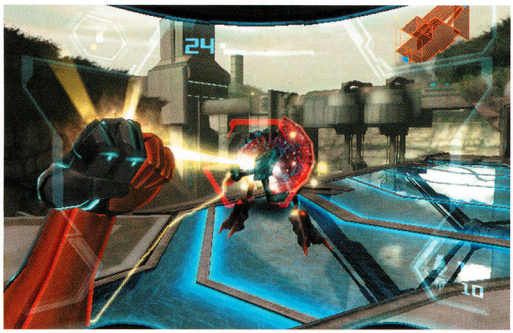
As much as we had hoped that the Big N would pull off a coup and have Metroid Prime 3: Corruption ready to go at launch, we weren't shocked when it didn't show up on the opening-day roster. But we were surprised at how much better the game looks than it did at E3. We got a chance to play a new level at Nintendo's big media event in New York City in September, and the new demo was jaw-dropping.

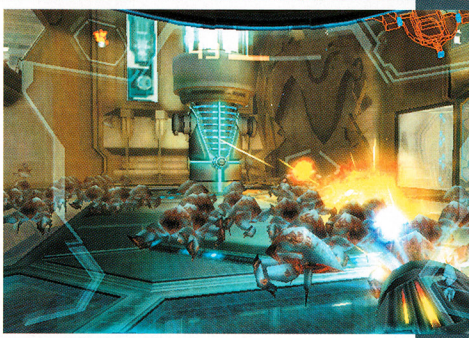
You find yourself on a Federation spaceship that has been invaded by aliens, and you must blast your way through its corridors. The graphics are leaps and bounds beyond their E3 state; the added lighting effects and a smooth frame rate are very impressive. People at the event commented that the game looked so good, it seemed like the level was built on a completely different game engine.

The controls have undergone some refinement, as well. The Wii remote feels much more responsive than in previous versions, and the targeting system works like a charm. Corruption is definitely paving the way for future FPS development.

We'll have a lot more news about Corruption down the road. For now, let's just enjoy the pretty pictures. —Chris S.







THE STORY OF YOUR FIGHTING IS
A POEM OF TWO WORDS:
you suck.
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Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.
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Wii™
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I CAN TRAIN EVEN YOU AT THE RED STEEL

DOJO OF PAIN™

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PITIFUL WORM, TRAIN WITH ME IF YOU WISH TO MASTER KATANAS, SHOTGUNS, UZI'S, REVOLVERS AND MORE.

MULTIPLE WEAPONS

HEAD-TO-HEAD

LET'S SEE WHO IS WORSE IN MULTIPLAYER BATTLE: YOU OR YOUR LOSER FRIENDS?

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(773-7855)

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UBISOFT®

Weird Science

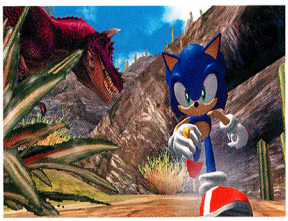
>FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST: DUAL SYMPATHY

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: DESTINEER
DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI
RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2006

For scientists, alchemists Edward and Alphonse Elric do an awful lot of butt-kicking. Luckily, alchemy gives them the ability to conjure cannons, barriers, heavy weights, and flames (among other things) as they go up against an army of bad guys in their search for the Philosopher's Stone. Based on the *Fullmetal Alchemist* anime series (broadcast on Cartoon Network's Adult Swim block), Dual Sympathy is an all-out battler with the brothers Elric taking turns fighting in Final Fight-style play. As they advance, they learn the abilities of some of their enemies. They also endure a series of touch-controlled tests, such as a memory exercise that challenges you to copy an enemy's footsteps and a rope trick that tasks you with untying a captured character.

In addition to the Story mode, the unlockable Character mode lets you choose between six battlers (Roy Mustang, Alex Louis Armstrong, and others) for more fighting fun. If that's not enough, the game has a character gallery, an alarm clock, and unlockable minigames, including the DS's first touch-controlled arm-wrestling challenge.
—GEORGE S.

Edward Elric is a slave to fashion and bad-guy beating.



Ring Leader

>SONIC AND THE SECRET RINGS

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SONIC TEAM • RELEASE: SPRING 2007

Formerly known as Sonic Wild Fire, Sonic and the Secret Rings takes the world's most famous hedgehog back to his roots in a blazingly quick action-platformer. As in his 16-bit days, Sonic is doing what he does best: dashing through levels, collecting rings, and navigating crazy corkscrew loops (albeit now with motion-sensitive controls and the ability to turbo-boost using a special meter). The game was one of the most impressive Wii titles when it debuted this past May, and it's looked even better in recent showings, which have revealed new prehistoric-themed levels that feature Sonic racing along dinosaurs' backs, outrunning charging triceratopses, and log-surfing down a treacherous river.

Even though much of the game offers a back-to-basics approach (Sonic's the only playable character, for example), Sonic and the Secret Rings promises a lot of depth. You'll be able to customize Sonic with various abilities, and beyond the single-player mode, more than 30 multiplayer party-style minigames await. Sonic looks like he's once again on the fast track to success. —CHRIS H.

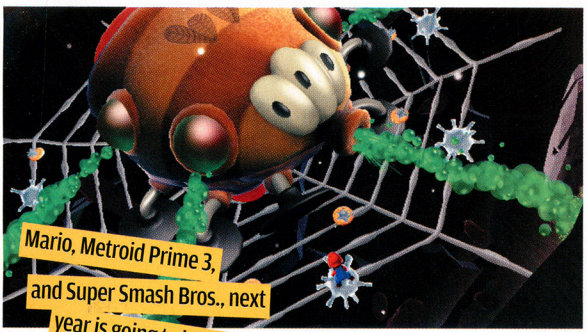
Planet-Hopping

>SUPER MARIO GALAXY

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO • RELEASE: 2007

To be completely honest, we don't really have any new information to share with you on Super Mario Galaxy, but we couldn't pass up the opportunity to show off these gorgeous new screenshots. The game just looks amazing; in this reporter's humble opinion, the only Wii title that compares in terms of visual punch is the one you see on the previous page (thus continuing the long-standing rivalry between plumber and hedgehog). More importantly, a recent opportunity to get reaquainted with the playable demo served as a reminder of just how much darn fun the game is. Nintendo's Tokyo studio has merged Wii controls with classic Mario platforming in a way that never feels forced or obtrusive. Rather, it comes across as a natural evolution of the series. Like a reassuring old friend, the game puts its arm around the hardcore gamer and says, "See, everything's gonna be alright. The kinds of experiences you've always loved *can* be enhanced by that newfangled controller." Thanks, Mario. —STEVE T.

Check out those reflections. Sooooo awesome.



Mario, Metroid Prime 3, and Super Smash Bros., next year is going to be amazing.

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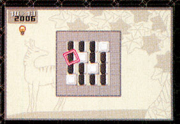

Make your own, trade them with friends-it's all up to you.

And thanks to the GBA, you can do it all one handed!

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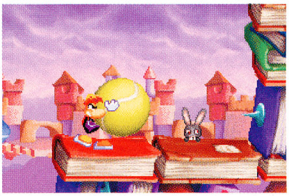
Force of Rabbid

>RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS

PLATFORM: GBA (ALSO ON WII & DS)
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT • DEVELOPER: VISUAL IMPACT
RELEASE: FALL 2006

While Michel Ancel's Montpellier studio takes the Wii version of Rayman Raving Rabbids in a radical new, non-platformy direction, the GBA game goes back to the limbless hero's roots with a traditional 2-D side-scroller. Tasked with saving his friends from the maniacal Rabbids, Rayman can acquire a number of different costumes that grant him various abilities. He'll find hip-hop threads that allow him to perform a powerful ground pound, for example, and punk-rock garb that lets him spit chewing gum to muck up enemy firearms. Some nice animation and imaginative backgrounds make for an attractive-looking game, and it seems to share its console counterpart's wacky sense of humor. Developer Visual Impact is somewhat unproven, but this one definitely shows promise. —STEVE T.

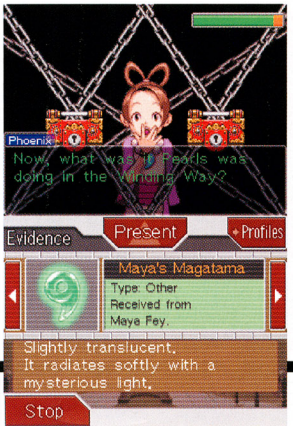


Legal Brief

>PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY JUSTICE FOR ALL

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM • RELEASE: Q1 2007

Get ready for a retrial: Phoenix Wright and company are returning to DS early in 2007 to provide more of the innovative graphic-and-text-based courtroom drama that made the first game a sleeper sensation. Though Justice for All features many familiar faces (including Phoenix's assistant, Maya, and the hapless Detective Gumshoe) and the same comedic interactions as the original, players can look forward to new characters (such as Maya's cousin Pearl and new rival Franziska von Karma) and the addition of a life bar for Phoenix that depletes if he follows the wrong lines of questioning. Wannabe attorneys will also have to deal with witnesses who hide the truth behind Psyche-Locks that, according to producer Minae Matsukawa, "should make the back-and-forth between you and witnesses much more exciting." Matsukawa also promises a more-compelling story and a revelation that ties into Edgeworth's words from the end of the original game. —CHRIS H.



Time to relax? Hardly. When you're an ace attorney, there's rarely a dull moment.

Like Fine Art

>CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN

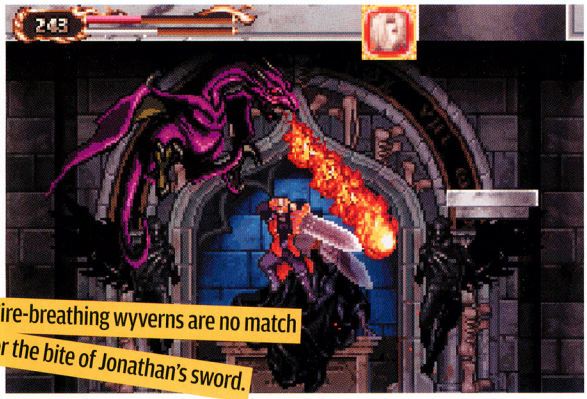
PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: KONAMI
DEVELOPER: KONAMI • RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2006

Schedule some vacation days for November—you're gonna need a lot of time to experience all of Portrait of Ruin.

The core narrative takes you through Dracula's castle, as well as into many exterior locales, such as bizarre, upside-down villages and dank swamps. There are plenty of side objectives that you can undertake, too; they're optional, but completely worth the time, as you're typically rewarded with some of the best items in the game. The inventory system is more robust than in previous Castlevanias, as well. Loads of weapons complement an enormous variety of abilities—you can spend all day tweaking and changing your characters' setups.

The two-character play control isn't just a gimmick—you'll use the characters to solve puzzles, such as leaving one person on a pedestal while the other one pushes it, thereby allowing you to reach a high platform. Character switching plays into combat, as well—some enemies will treat you differently depending whether you're the hero or the heroine. —CHRIS S.

What Charlotte loses in physical strength, she more than makes up for with her magic skills.



Fire-breathing wyverns are no match for the bite of Jonathan's sword.

All The Same Players, But A Completely New Level!

The Super Mario Bros. Super Show! Vol. 2

No one knew how to take kids on an adventure quite like Mario and Luigi, who made a habit of pulling us out of our Saturday morning living rooms and into the magical Mushroom Kingdom. So, Shout! Factory did what any fan would do: boxed up more of their adventures on another deluxe 4-DVD set, packed it with 4 bonus episodes, added appearances by Captain Lou Albano and Danny Wells, and more!

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Lots of Kirby Appeal

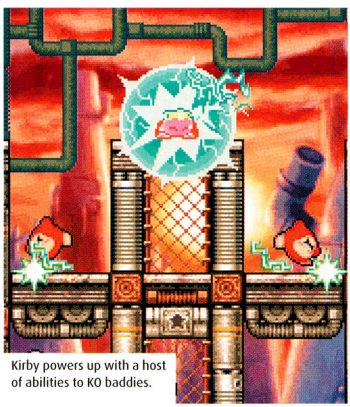
>KIRBY: SQUEAK SQUAD

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: HAL • RELEASE: DECEMBER 2006

Kirby's original DS outing drew on the power of the Touch screen, and by challenging players to sketch Kirby's path it illustrated just how unique DS action-platformers could be. But with Kirby: Squeak Squad, coming to DS this December, HAL's Kirby development team returns to the roots of the franchise by focusing on Kirby's signature ability to copy special abilities from the enemies he swallows. The twist—and it's a good one—is that Squeak Squad's Kirby can store up to five abilities (along with other items and treasures) and mix them to create new abilities. The stomach-like crucible where the abilities are stored fills the Touch screen, and its contents are selected, used, combined, or disgorged using the stylus. All the platform action takes place on the top screen, where Kirby's movements and attacks are controlled via the Control Pad and buttons just like in the good old Game Boy days.

Kirby fans have much to anticipate. Motivated by the notorious Squeak Squad's theft of Dream-Land treasures, Kirby runs, floats, and fights through eight worlds filled with enemies whose abilities can transform Kirby into anything from an arrow-firing cupid to a dirt-digging mole. There are more than 25 abilities in all, and many of the abilities affect the environment, for example freezing water or torching grass. When you're in the mood to share some Kirby action, Squeak Squad delivers with three DS Download Play fast-action sub-games. It's a Kirby feast, which may explain why our hero is so round. —SCOTT P.

King Dedede still has unresolved issues with the pink hero.



Kirby powers up with a host of abilities to KO baddies.

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(s06)
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Crude Humor
NINTENDO GAMECUBE
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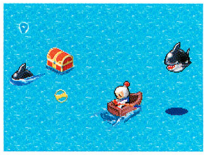
Bombs and Booty

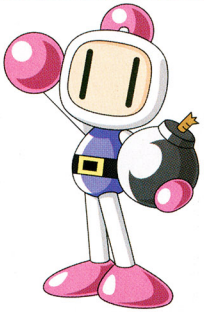
>BOMBERMAN LAND TOUCH!

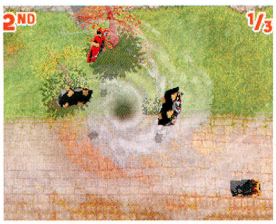
PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: ATLUS
DEVELOPER: HUDSON • RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2006

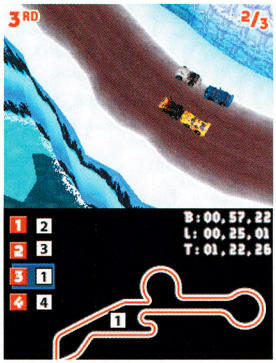
Ahoy, mateys! In Bomberman's latest outing, he's set sail for Bomber Island, land of pirates. These swashbucklers, however, aren't exactly the scurvy scoundrels of the high seas—they're attendants at a pirate-themed amusement park—and Bomberman's adventure isn't the typical explosive expedition, either. Bomberman Land Touch! is built around the DS's touch screen, which is used for movement, exploration, and NPC interaction. But most important, it's used for playing tons of minigame attractions, such as Defuse or Lose (in which you must find the correct bomb within a strict time limit) and a bowling variation called Bowling for Bombs. As you conquer attractions, you'll earn tickets and new gear, allowing you to explore even more of the park. Of course, if you'd rather just blow stuff up, you can play Bomberman Land Touch!'s traditional battle mode, which features tons of options and allows up to eight players to compete using a single game card. —CHRIS H.

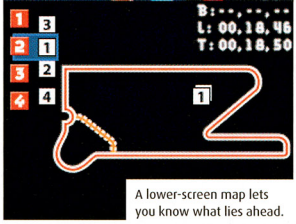
Nothing goes together like bombs and theme parks.











A lower-screen map lets you know what lies ahead.

Driving Force

>TOP GEAR: DOWNFORCE

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: KEMCO
DEVELOPER: TANTALUS
RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2006

Kemco's Top Gear racing series takes an unexpected turn with its DS debut. Shifting from Top Gear's traditional behind-the-car view to an overhead view, Downforce lets you see competing cars and hazards at a glance. It also gives you a preview of what's around every corner, allowing you to prepare for any situation.

Eight Grand Prix events each offer three races from a pool of 48 tracks. The eight environments include the outback, a jungle, and Bay City (the latter inspired by the streets of San Francisco). Every track features shortcuts, boost pads, and two types of hazards, such as a cyclone and miscellaneous debris. In some events, you can even place a hazard, specifying its location and a lap in which it appears. Six car choices range from a sports car to a 4x4, each with its own physics and handling.

Up to four Downforce owners can connect for multiplayer races and Grand Prix events; each player adds a hazard to the track. You can also exchange Time Attack data, giving you a chance to best your pals' greatest driving performances. —GEORGE S.

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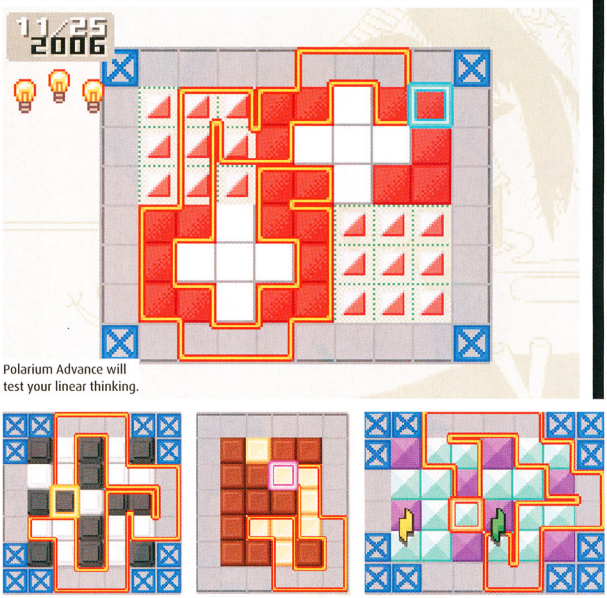
Play Inside the Lines

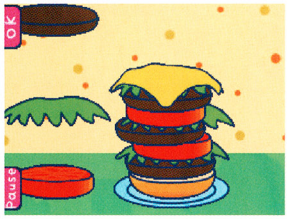
>POLARIUM ADVANCE

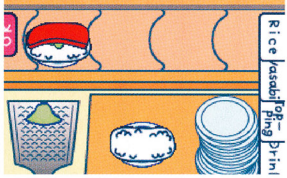
PLATFORM: GBA • PUBLISHER: ATLUS
DEVELOPER: MITCHELL • RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2006

Taking a DS game and adapting it for a GBA sequel might sound like an unusual course of action, but that's what Mitchell has done with Polarium—and the game is all the better for it. The premise of Polarium hasn't changed; you still need to draw a single, continuous line over a dual-colored grid to flip tiles and eliminate them by creating horizontal lines of a single color. (Trust us; it's a lot simpler than it sounds.) However, in many ways, Polarium Advance surpasses the original. The game features new types of tiles—hurdle tiles that restrict where you can draw your line, multi-tiles that act as wildcards and automatically change color to that of surrounding tiles, and solid tiles that suspend other tiles and allow for chain-reaction combos—to give the game added complexity. Naturally, Polarium Advance lacks the touch-screen control of the DS version, but it does let you select from various colored patterns instead of restricting you to a monochromatic palette. Add in more than 350 puzzles, time trials, and a custom puzzle editor, you have a game that'll keep you straining your brain for a good long while. —CHRIS H.



Polarium Advance will test your linear thinking.





Get a Job

>TAMAGOTCHI CONNECTION: CORNER SHOP 2

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI
DEVELOPER: NANA-ONSHA • RELEASE: WINTER 2006

January's Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop might not have taken North America by storm, but the game was a huge hit in Japan—so much so that the sequel is almost upon us. Like the original, Corner Shop 2 isn't a virtual-pet simulator; it's all about entrepreneurship. It's up to you and your tamagotchi pal to turn fledgling boutiques into massive conglomerates by satisfying customers via predominantly menu-driven touch-screen minigames. Some of the businesses come straight from the first Tamagotchi Connection—such as the cake bakery, flower shop, and music hall—but others are brand-new. The tasks include assembling delicious hamburgers as ingredients fall from the sky; pumping gas, changing tires, and washing cars at a service station; setting up pins and retrieving balls at a bowling alley; making a variety of sushi and sending it to customers via conveyor belt; and even taking patients' temperatures and giving them shots at the doctor's office. There are 12 businesses in all, and you can use the profits to buy an assortment of knickknacks for your tamagotchi. Capitalism at its finest! —CHRIS H.

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Wii™

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Monster Monitor

>DIGIMON WORLD DS

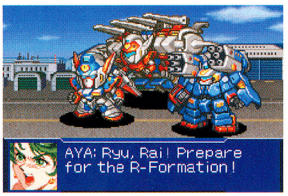
PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI
DEVELOPER: BANDAI • RELEASE: FALL 2006

The Digimon are spreading. No longer contained within the digital world, Namco Bandai's monster franchise is taking over the real world via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. Digimon World's first DS venture allows you to trade with and battle against other Digimon trainers from across the globe. Play through the adventure, collect your fill of 230 Digimon in different stages of their evolution, then make a connection with your digi friends and rivals. By sharing Digimon across the Wi-Fi waves, you can develop rare breeds.

You can also raise and evolve your creatures in your Digi-farm. As you connect with the monsters on your farm, your bond with them will grow, making them better battlers. Though the adventure has you exploring locations all over the digital world, you can always watch the activity on your farm on the top screen. With farming and fighting experience, you will rise in stature and eventually become Tamer King. —GEORGE S.

Some programs have bugs. This one has monsters.

Turn-based battles rule Digimon World.



Now if only there was a "transform" option.

Robot Redux

>SUPER ROBOT TAISEN: ORIGINAL GENERATION 2

PLATFORM: GBA • PUBLISHER: ATLUS
DEVELOPER: BANPRESTO • RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2006

A mere three months after the release of the first Super Robot Taisen, Atlus is set to deliver another payload of mech-powered strategy to North American gamers this November. Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation 2 picks up six months after the events of the first game (if only Atlus had waited a bit longer, life could have imitated art), and follows the exploits of our heroes in the aftermath of the war against Dr. Zoldark's Divine Crusaders. Aside from some flashier battle animations and minor customization tweaks, the sequel looks and plays almost identically to its predecessor. Our main gripe with that game was the lack of new stuff introduced throughout the 40-hour campaign to keep things interesting. If developer Banpresto has addressed the problem and injected the missions with a bit more creativity, Original Generation 2 could be one of the GBA's most compelling propositions this holiday season. —STEVE T.

Bunnies Gone Bad

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Play is the thing

>>Press Start

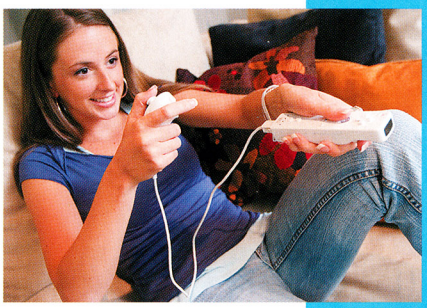
The Wii™ revolution is about to begin. Get set for a more active, more engaging, and more inviting game experience than ever before.

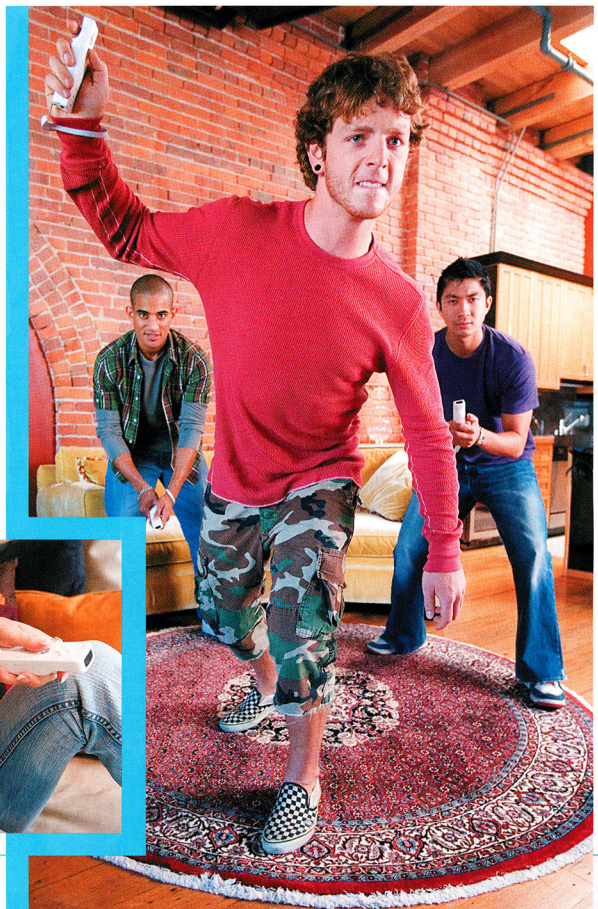
By George Sinfield

Nintendo is used to taking monumental leaps into new gaming frontiers. Before the NES took the world by storm in the late '80s, many believed home console gaming to be a passing fad. Two decades and tens of millions of consoles later, the company has built an uncontested reputation for innovation in game design (platformers originated with the Super Mario series, adventures with the Zelda series) and hardware development—particularly in the area of controllers (analog sticks, the rumble feature, and that intangible quality of always having the right button in the right place).

On November 19th, Nintendo's Wii console will usher in a new age of gaming—one that aims to include even those who have never thought to pick up a controller. With a modern design, a plug-and-play interface, online channels, and intuitive motion control that puts you into the game in unexpected ways, the Wii console invites everyone to be a part of the experience.

The price ($249.99 MSRP, $279.95 in Canada) and pack-ins make Wii the most affordable console of the new generation, and the unprecedented number of titles that will be available at (or shortly after) the system's launch will give everyone something to look forward to. Wii Sports is bundled with the hardware. Seperately sold games, such as The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess and Excite Truck also have mass appeal. You want it, Wii has it.





>>Welcome to Wii

Nearly everyone watches television and movies, reads books and magazines, surfs the Internet, and engages in leisure activities. With Wii, Nintendo puts playing games into that all-inclusive category. It's not at the expense of the already initiated, either. Wii expands on the qualities that brought game enthusiasts—like you—to Nintendo in the first place. It will show everyone what you already know—that games can be easy to understand, but still an exciting challenge to master. And, it'll expand your definition of good gaming, too; it'll give you a new way to interact with games, and offer titles from Nintendo's storied past that you may not have played. The world of Wii is open and everyone is welcome to participate.

The Wii Menu connects you to the console, offering everything from the Mii Channel (a place for you to customize your Wii personality) to Internet-linked pages, and access to your library of Virtual Console titles.

>>Come One, Come All

There's no generation or gender gap with Wii. You don't have to have been born with a controller in your hand to get it. The Wii Remote is as easy to operate as a television remote control, and much more versatile. Games run the gamut, too, from crowd-pleasers to titles that are geared for a specific audience.

>>Mix It Up

Traditionally, the physical activity of playing video games is limited to thumb and finger movement. Wii games (particularly Wii Sports, Madden NFL 07, and the upcoming WarioWare: Smooth Moves) get your whole body into the action. You can play with subtle flicks of the wrist, but big gestures are just more fun.

>>Live a Gaming Life

If you have a broadband Internet connection, you can use your Wii to surf the Web (separate purchase required, subject to availability) on your television, and switch to special channels that give you up-to-the-minute news and worldwide weather. There are plans for more-gaming-oriented connections, too.

>>Play a Little, Play a Lot

Whether you want a quick shot of entertainment—a sports, action, or classic arcade-style game—or you want to delve deep into a gaming world for hours at a time, you can do it on Wii. The upcoming Metroid Prime 3: Corruption proves that hard-core gaming on Wii is alive and well.

>>Get This Party Started

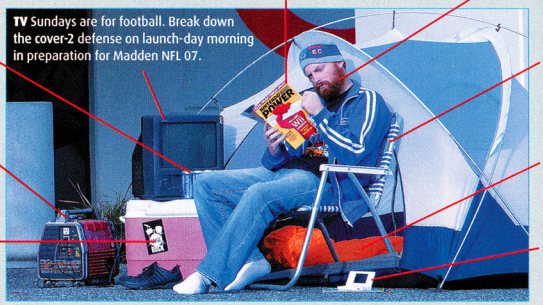
Playing a game on Wii can be a great social experience. Moving your body to influence onscreen action is like a game outside of the game, and it's a raging party with Wii Sports, Excite Truck, and a whole host of games on the way.

>>Go Old-School

Retro gaming rules with Wii. The Virtual Console™ library will start with about 30 games spanning the NES, Super NES, N64, Sega Genesis, and TurboGrafx consoles, and expand at a steady rate to bring you the best of the past.

>>A Waiting-for-Wii Survival Guide

Can't wait for November 19th? Neither can our man on the street: Pete Michaud. The gamer's gamer, Pete has almost everything he needs while he prepares for launch.



Right out of the box >>Unpack and Play

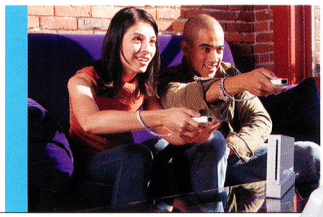
So, you're ready to pony up, plunk down your hard-earned cash, and buy the Wii console. What do you get for your dollars? A lot. As soon as you open the box, you'll be able to start playing. It's all there: the main unit, the Wii Remote and Nunchuk Controllers, and a game that takes advantage of the Wii Remote.

>>Wii Console

Just look at it. It's sleek, compact, and pleasing to the eye. The power, reset, and eject buttons blend into the frame. Easy-to-remove pieces cover expansion ports, and the disc slot emits a soothing blue glow. Lay the console so that it rests on a flat surface horizontally, or place it in its stand for vertical presentation. The console accepts DVD-sized Wii discs, or smaller GCN discs for backward-compatible play. The SD card slot lets you transfer photos from your digital camera to the console for access on the Photo Channel. The sync button lets you synchronize the console with additional Wii Remotes. On the other end of the unit, you'll find two USB connectors, and connectors for the AC adapter, the sensor bar, and the Wii AV cable. The top of the unit houses four GCN controller ports and two slots for GCN memory cards.

>>Wii Sports

To get you started with motion-based control right away, the Wii console comes with Wii Sports packed in. The collection includes tennis, baseball, bowling, boxing, and golfing activities for multiple players, and allows you to plug in characters that you've designed on the console's Mii Channel.



>>Nunchuk™

Some games, such as The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess, have you attach the Nunchuk to the Wii Remote for additional control options. The Nunchuk features a comfortable, ergonomic design, a Control Stick, and two buttons. Like the Wii Remote, the Nunchuk is motion-sensitive, allowing for another dimension of game control.

>>Wii Remote

The Wii Remote is the primary Wii controller, which allows for point-and-click-style gameplay. It's also motion-sensitive, letting you twist, lunge, tilt, and lift your way to gaming greatness. A rumble device and a built-in speaker offer feedback. The remote's input devices include a Control Pad, six buttons on the surface, and one button on the back side. Four lights near the base of the remote indicate which position the controller has been set to (player one through four, from left to right).

>>Also Included

The wrist strap for the Wii Remote keeps you from dropping the remote in intense gaming situations. The system also includes all of the cords necessary for powering the console and hooking it up to your television.

>>Sensor Bar

The sensor bar, set close to your television, works in concert with the Wii Remote to sense pointer coordinates. A stand is included for the bar.

Changing Channels

>>Games & More

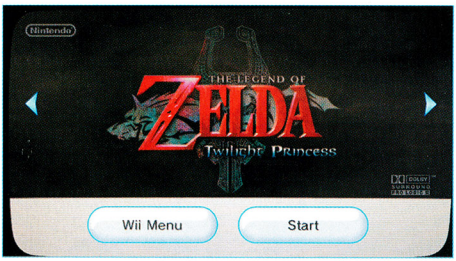
By Chris Hoffman

Games may be Wii's primary focus, but its capabilities don't stop there. From the Wii Menu, you can access channels that allow you to browse the Web (when available, separate purchase required) create custom 3-D avatars, manage photos, download content, post messages, and more. The following channels will be available when Wii launches, and accessing them is completely free (though a broadband connection is required for some channels).

Wanna see the Wii channels in action? Check them out—and get the latest Wii news—at: **www.wii.com.**

>>Disc Channel

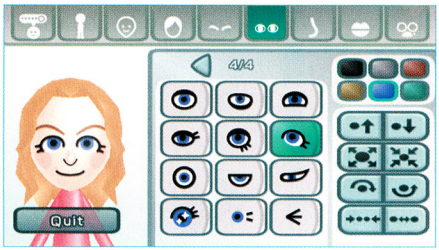
This is the channel you'll probably be using the most—it's what you'll select to play a Wii or GameCube game. Between Wii's robust launch-window lineup and more than 500 existing games in the GameCube library, you'll have plenty of choices.



The Disc Channel is your gateway to playing Wii games like The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess and many others.

>>Mii Channel

Using the Mii Channel, you'll be able to create your own 3-D caricatures called Miis. Thanks to the included customization software, you'll be able to modify every aspect of your Miis' appearances, from eye shapes and mouth positions to their heights and the colors of their clothes. You can save dozens of Miis to the Wii's internal memory, and store up to 10 of them on the Wii Remote, which you can then take to friends' systems to build an entire Mii community. The Miis can even be used as characters in games such as Wii Sports.



>>Photo Channel

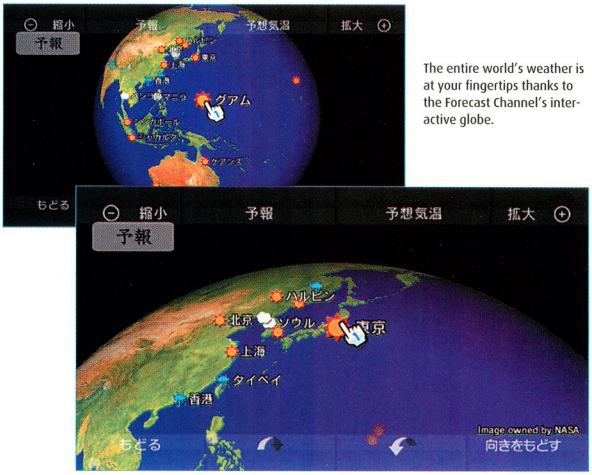
A picture is worth a thousand words, so the Photo Channel must be worth millions. If you've got a digital camera, you can transfer photos and videos to Wii via SD memory card, then view or edit the images on the TV. A point-and-click interface lets you modify photos in numerous ways, such as adjusting the colors to make photos monochromatic, cutting and pasting parts of photos to create a new image, adding pre-designed graphics (such as a pair of sunglasses) or custom doodles to photos, and adding blur effects or other special touches. You can also transform photos into puzzles or put on a slide show, and you can add music to the imagery in the form of MP3s.

The Photo Channel offers a convenient way to view and organize photos from the comfort of your couch.

No need to humiliate your canine in real life. With the Photo Channel, you can virtually dress up your dog to your heart's content.

>>Forecast Channel

Checking out the weather report might not sound like the most exciting experience, but Wii turns getting the forecast into interactive amusement. As long as the Wii is connected to the Internet through WiiConnect24, you can get weather reports from all over the world—just spin the 3-D globe and zoom in on the locale of your choice. You can also check out your current weather conditions or get a forecast for the coming week.



The entire world's weather is at your fingertips thanks to the Forecast Channel's interactive globe.

>>Wii Shop Channel

The Wii Shop Channel is where the excitement happens. Want to download classic Virtual Console games? Do it here. Want to download new, downloadable content (perhaps new maps or quests)? This is the place. Need to download a Web browser? Yep, you guessed it. Wii Points are the currency used for all download-based transactions, and you can buy Wii Point Cards at retail locations or purchase the points directly through the Wii Shop Channel using a credit card. Each Wii Point costs a penny, so 2,000 Wii Points will run you $20.

>>News Channel

All the day's headlines are delivered directly to your fingertips thanks to the News Channel and WiiConnect24. News items are separated by category, and you can zoom in or out of articles for easier viewing. Similar to the Forecast Channel, the News Channel uses a 3-D globe to represent where news is happening.

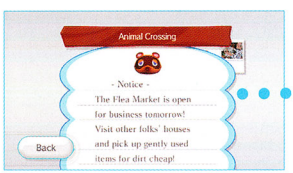
>>Internet Channel

With Wii, you can have full Internet access from the comfort of your couch. Simply download the Wii-specific Web browser created by Opera Software (and have an Internet connection, naturally), and you'll be able to use the Wii Remote to surf the Web at your leisure. Opera's browser promises to be just as feature-rich as PC-based Web browsers, and it comes complete with bookmarks, a zoom feature, and compatibility with Adobe Flash Coming soon, separate purchase required.

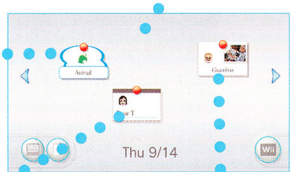
Wii's Internet browser promises to be just as robust as its PC counterparts. (PC screenshot shown.)

>>Wii Message Board

Think of the Wii Message Board as a virtual fridge door—one that you can use to leave reminders to yourself or memos for your family or roommates via a calendar-based interface. Of course, you can also send notes (including pictures from the Photo Channel) to other Wii users, or send text messages to friends' cell phones. Additionally, the Wii Message Board uses WiiConnect24 to inform you about game updates, such as new game characters, items, weapons, or other enhancements. The possibilities are nearly endless.



The calendar-based Wii Message Board will allow you to receive updates about games . . .

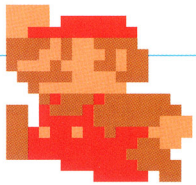


. . . and post notes to other members of your household . . .

and get messages and photos from friends and family.

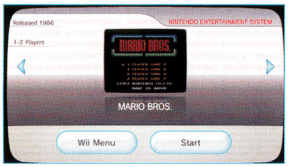
>>But Wait; There's More

While seven channels—the Disc Channel, Mii Channel, Photo Channel, Forecast Channel, News Channel, Wii Shop Channel, and Wii Message Board—will be available right out the gate, the Wii Channel Menu can hold a total of 48 different channels on internal memory. Each Virtual Console title you download will be assigned its own channel that you'll access from the menu, and completely new channels devoted to a variety of subjects could be added down the line.



True Classics >>Better With Age

Ever since Nintendo president Satoru Iwata announced Wii's ability to play classic games, gamers have been salivating at the thought of playing all their favorites on a single console. Around 30 games from the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES), Nintendo 64, Sega Genesis, and TurboGrafx systems will be available for download through the Wii Shop Channel on Nov. 19, and more will become available on a regular basis. The Virtual Console launch lineup and pricing specifics were still under wraps at press time, but expect many games to be downloaded for as little as 500 Wii Points. Look for complete Virtual Console details in the next issue.



Each Virtual Console title you download will be assigned its own channel. Let the games begin!

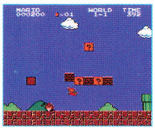
>>Virtual Control

To go along with all the retro-gaming goodness, a Classic Controller will be available at the system's launch. The Classic Controller is needed to play Virtual Console games and is sold separately. The thin, traditionally shaped peripheral plugs directly into the Wii remote, and it combines the best features of the SNES and N64 controllers, such as a digital Control Pad; A, B, X, and Y face buttons; L and R shoulder buttons; two Z buttons at the top of the pad; and two analog joysticks. Some, but not all, Virtual Console titles will be playable only via the Classic Controller, which carries a suggested price of $19.99.

>>System Shock

The Virtual Console game library draws upon more than 20 years of gaming history spanning no fewer than five consoles. If you missed out on the classic systems during their heyday, here's your lesson from the old school.

>>NES®



Originally released in North America in 1985, the NES was the undisputed champ of the 8-bit era. Even though it could display only 16 colors onscreen at once and its processor ran at less than 2MHz, the NES set the standard in nearly every genre imaginable and made Mario, Metroid, and Zelda into household names. The NES's Zapper light-gun games seem ideally suited for revival on Wii.

>>SNES®

As its name implies, the Super NES was the direct successor to the NES, boasting superior graphics and music capabilities. The SNES was also known for its ability to scale and rotate sprites thanks to a technology called Mode 7. The system boasted tons of original games, along with nearly perfect ports of many of the day's best arcade games. The Super NES came out in North America in 1991.

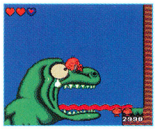
>>Nintendo 64®

For the Nintendo faithful, the Nintendo 64's 1996 release represented the evolution of gaming and the transition into the 3-D era. Many innovations introduced on the N64—built-in four-player support, a tactile rumble feature, and the inclusion of analog controllers—became industry standards. As favorite Nintendo franchises were reinvented in 3-D, they established new gameplay benchmarks that are rarely surpassed even today.

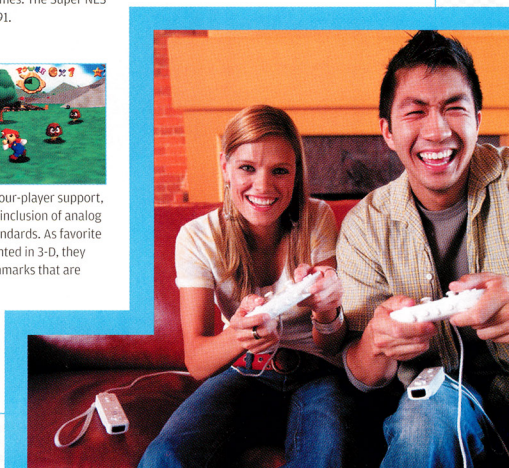
>>Sega Genesis™

Two years before Nintendo released the Super NES, Sega released its 16-bit powerhouse: the Genesis. Superior technology and a seemingly endless stream of Sega arcade hits made the system a huge hit, and it played host to Sonic the Hedgehog's debut in 1991. The debate over whether SNES or Genesis was better raged in schoolyards throughout the US; who would have guessed that Virtual Console would bring the two systems together?

>>TurboGrafx™



The TurboGrafx-16, released in the US in 1989, wasn't quite as successful stateside as the SNES or the Genesis, but in Japan, where it was known as the PC Engine, the TurboGrafx was king. Codeveloped by NEC and Hudson, the TurboGrafx used two 8-bit processors in unison to deliver hits like head-banging platformer Bonk's Adventure.



Twilight Gleaming

>>A Legend at Launch

By George Sinfield

The unprecedented size and quality of the Wii launch lineup will be capped with the most anticipated release in recent memory. On November 19th, the wait will finally be over for The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess. It is epic, beautiful, and full of surprises, not the least of which is the way that Wii Remote adds to the adventure's immersiveness. It's also enormous, providing as much gameplay in the overworld (Hyrule and beyond) as in its nine huge dungeons.

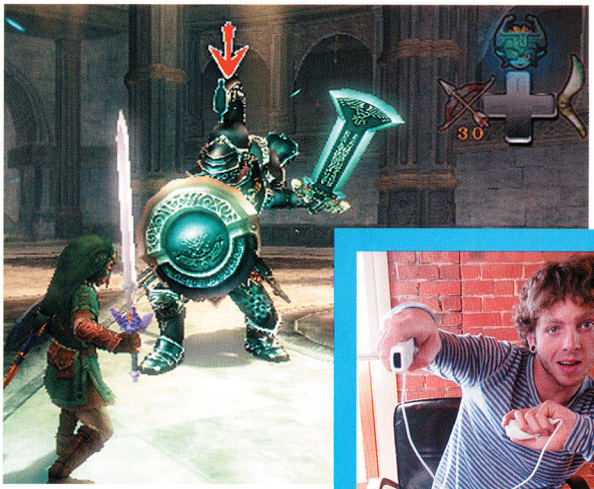
But perhaps Twilight Princess's most striking feature is the way that it advances the legend, telling the story of a kingdom caught between light and shadow, day and night. As Link emerges from his place as humble villager to a world-saving hero, he also transforms into a creature of the darkness, with animal instincts and vicious new abilities. The game's art style recalls that of Ocarina of Time (two generations improved), as does Link's horsemanship and his adept use of a sword, a bow, a boomerang, and other familiar (but enhanced) tools. He even casts a fishing line. Get ready—you're about to catch the big one.

From rancher to hero: Link in Twilight Princess.

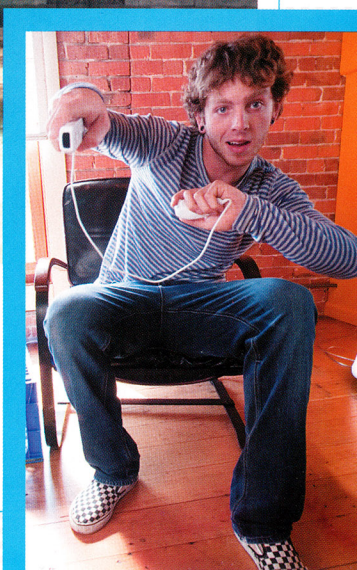
>>On Becoming a Hero

Link is left-handed traditionally, but for the Wii version of Twilight Princess, he becomes a righty to sync with the way that you will use the controls: the Wii Remote in your right hand to trigger weapons, and the Nunchuk in your left hand to manage the character's movement. By swiping the remote, you'll make the hero slash his sword. By thrusting forward while Link moves toward a locked-on target, you'll instruct him to jab his prey. Shake the Nunchuk to have Link spin 360 degrees, slicing every enemy within his range. The remote also gives you pinpoint aim with projectile weapons. And, when Link is in wolf form, waving the Wii Remote causes him to maul enemies with his teeth and claws. A shake of the Nunchuk makes him spin and beat bad guys with his body. The great strength of the control scheme is that it gives you the ability to command the character intuitively, making it easy to imagine yourself as the hero—and the beast—of Hyrule.

Your journey begins in Ordon Village, where Link works as a farm hand, herding sheep from the back of steed Epona and teaching the local children the proper use of a slingshot and a wooden sword. When shadow creatures appear from the twilight realm then trash the village and take some of its citizens captive (including the children), the young rancher finds himself, in the form of a wolf, behind bars in the twilight realm: a dark and deserted version of Hyrule Castle. That's where the mysterious Midna comes into the picture and leads Link to the Twilight Princess. It doesn't take much guesswork to figure out the princess's real identity, but it's still a thrill to see her pull back the hood of her cloak and reveal herself. She exposes Link, too, as the one who must lift the kingdom from the cover of darkness and save its citizens from the shadow creatures. From there, the adventure unfolds like the classic Legend of Zelda game that it is. Link ventures far and wide, both as a wolf and as a human, out of his



The hero faces off against a Darknut. The Nunchuk's Z Button locks Link's focus on the enemy. Swipes and thrusts of the Wii Remote trigger corresponding sword maneuvers.

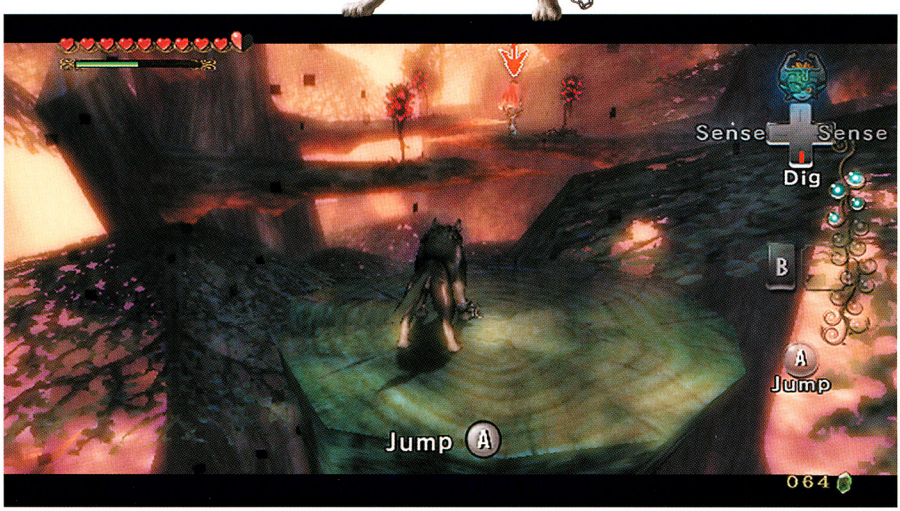


ranch hand getup and in the green tunic—the Hero's Clothes. Later he earns additional armor that bestows him with new abilities.

The game's quest has Link freeing the world by entering dungeons, solving puzzles, and making his way to battles against the creatures who would keep the darkness over the kingdom for all time. Nearly every dungeon holds a tool that gives the hero the power to reach new areas. The Gale Boomerang, an updated version of one of Link's longstanding weapons, creates a whirlwind that picks up and carries items back to the hero. It's also capable of hitting targets in a series. After you point to your targets then let go of the weapon, it sails to each destination, causing havoc for the enemies, and even carrying bombs to Link's target. The Hero's Bow is another new version of an item that Link has had in his arsenal for some time. While riding Epona across the battlefield, Link can turn and fire arrows at those who wish him harm. That's just the beginning of Link's arsenal. He carries two types of Clawshots. A single claw works as a grappling device, letting the adventurer reach new heights. Dual claws work like Tarzan's vines or Spider-Man's webbing, allowing Link to swing over gaps. Iron Boots also have multiple uses. They grip magnetic surfaces, letting the hero walk upside down on the ceiling. They also make Link sink to the bottoms of lakes and rivers, and keep him from being swept away by strong winds. Another heavy item, the Ball and Chain, forces Link to walk slowly while he's carrying it, but powers through enemies and weak walls. On the lighter side is the Spinner, a rotating platform with which Link charges into enemies and hovers over the ground. It has gears that make it latch onto tracks and reach otherwise-inaccessible areas. Link has three types of bombs, as well, plus many other useful devices.

When twilight realm's dark magic turns our hero into a toothy beast, he is capable of digging holes to discover passages, and can use his canine senses to root out secrets. His passenger, Midna, offers clues,

Not all residents of the twilight realm are ferocious beasts. Midna is a mysterious creature who acts as Link's guide throughout the adventure.



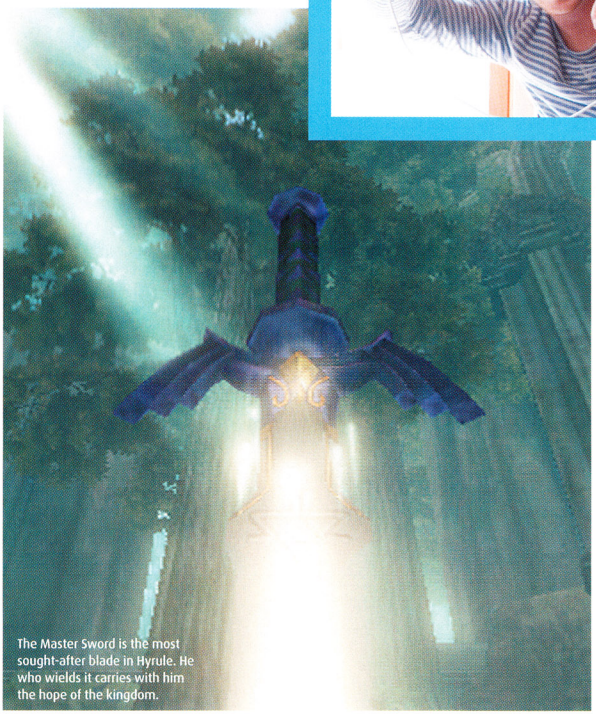
creates an energy field that stuns and targets enemies, and guides the wolf over difficult terrain. But, Midna's involvement doesn't stop there. At a crucial point in the adventure, she gives Link the ability to travel long distances in an instant, teleporting from one exotic location to the next.

Graphically speaking, the game makes a big leap from its predecessors. In an adventure that deals with a war between the powers of light and dark, it's fitting that the game accentuates illumination and shadows, creating a moody atmosphere both in the normal plane and in the twilight realm. Early on, Link earns an oil lamp that gives off a yellow glow, spreading light over the hero and his immediate surroundings as he explores a cave. Torches, which Link can light with the lamp, help him spread the hazy light that reveals items and enemies in the passages. Shortly after that episode, a monkey grabs the lamp and uses it to burn away a deadly fog, giving you an eerily beautiful trip to the game's first dungeon.

Beyond the main adventure, the game is loaded with side quests and item collection. Not only are heart pieces (now five to a heart container) scattered all over the land, but so are a series of golden bugs and Imp Poe Souls (found only at night).

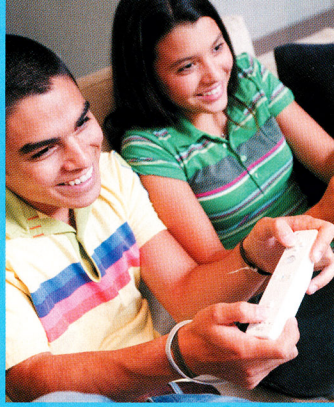
To enhance the experience even more, the Wii's rumble feature accentuates damage from enemies and emphasizes the presence of hidden items. And the remote's speaker calls attention to ambient sounds, such as Midna's laugh (which indicates that she has something to say), the slash of Link's sword, and the snap of his bow.

Twilight Princess's long journey to the Wii console is about to come to a close, and the real journey—Link's quest to save Hyrule—is about to begin. Like the original Legend of Zelda game, and many of the Zelda titles that have followed, the game will set the bar to a new height for adventures to come.



The Master Sword is the most sought-after blade in Hyrule. He who wields it carries with him the hope of the kingdom.

Wii Buyer's Guide >>Game On



We'll go out on a limb and say that almost everyone who buys a Wii console at launch will pick up a copy of Twilight Princess. But nearly 30 other games under development will be vying for your attention between November 19th and the end of the year—easily the most robust launch line-up ever for a Nintendo console. On the following pages, we'll give you an updated look at each title and provide you with NP's picks for the best of the bunch.

Excite Truck

>>Developer: Monster Games
Publisher: Nintendo

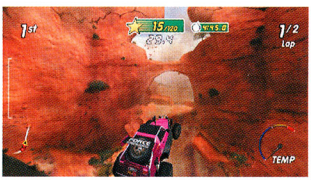
STAFF PICK!

It may not be getting as much hype as the other first-party launch titles, but Excite Truck's good ol'-fashioned arcade-style thrills have us pretty . . . well . . . excited. The game moves at a blazingly fast clip despite some absolutely massive environments, and like its NES inspiration, Excitebike, places a major focus on huge, protracted jumps. Grabbing big air and sticking the landing is key to victory; if you adjust your vehicle's pitch (by tilting the Wii Remote) so that all four wheels touch down simultaneously, you'll earn a sound-barrier-shattering speed boost that can help you rocket past the competition. Further adding to the game's over-the-top antics are special power-ups that you can drive over to deform the terrain in real time (typically giving you a steep hill or ramp to launch your truck from), and potentially devastating natural disasters like tornadoes and volcanic eruptions. Races take place everywhere from The Great Wall of China to a Finnish shipyard, and the level of trackside detail is fairly impressive (the latest version of the game we played looked significantly better than the E3 demo). The final product will also include a two-player split-screen mode, which could make for some pretty frenetic competition if the frame rate holds steady.

As for the controls, steering your truck with the Wii Remote takes some getting used to, especially at such high speeds. Fortunately, the game seems to be pretty forgiving—should you happen to crash or veer off course, you simply mash the buttons to get back into the race at a reasonably generous restart point.

It's not tremendously deep or complex, but for pure, unadulterated fun, Excite Truck looks like it will deliver in spades. —**Steve T.**

Keep an eye out for flying bovines.



Super Monkey Ball: Banana Blitz

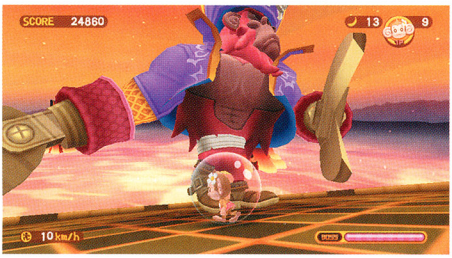
STAFF PICK!

>>Developer: Sega • Publisher: Sega

Monkeying around with the Wii Remote is not only permitted, but encouraged. Super Monkey Ball: Banana Blitz, the first all-new effort from the series' original creative team since Super Monkey Ball 2, is rolling exclusively to Wii. The title puts an interesting twist on the franchise's familiar mechanics: Rather than using an analog stick to tilt the monkeys' world, you'll simply tilt the Wii Remote. It also adds an entirely new component—the ability to jump. This feature (performed by flicking the controller upward or by pressing A) adds a whole new dynamic to the Monkey Ball world, opening up the level-design possibilities dramatically. If you're new to the whole monkeys-in-balls concept, Banana Blitz will serve as a great introduction. The development team has put a lot of effort into smoothing out the difficulty level of the single-player game to ease new players in, while keeping the later levels challenging for Monkey Ball pros. Also, Banana Blitz will offer an insane number of multiplayer party games in hopes of giving packed-in title Wii Sports a run for its money. —Andy M.

Banana Blitz plays as fast as ever, and boasts the nicest-looking visuals to date for the Monkey Ball series.

The minigames use the Wii Remote in just about every way you can imagine.



MeeMee's battle against a giant gorilla/pirate/robotic crab thingy depicts another first for the series: boss battles!

Wii

GT Pro Series

>>Developer: MTO • Publisher: Ubisoft

The latest in a franchise that was previously released only in Japan, GT Pro Series mixes drift-heavy, arcade-style racing with more than 80 Japanese licensed cars, heavy tuning options, and cel-shaded graphics. —Steve T.

Both GT Pro Series and Monster 4x4: World Circuit come with this nifty steering-wheel attachment. Since the Wii Remote simply fits into it horizontally, the wheel should work with other racing games as well.

Staff Picks: Steve T.

I know that some devoted Rayman fans are bummed that Raving Rabbids isn't a full-fledged platformer, but remember: In Ancel We Trust.

1. THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS
2. RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS
3. METAL SLUG ANTHOLOGY
4. RED STEEL
5. EXCITE TRUCK

Far Cry: Vengeance

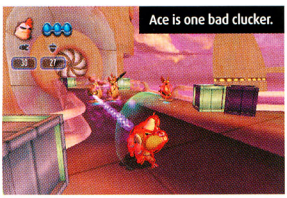
>>Developer: Ubisoft Montreal • Publisher: Ubisoft

This Wii-exclusive installment of the critically acclaimed Far Cry series builds on the previous iteration for Xbox with an expanded storyline, extra characters and weapons, three additional maps, and a new split-screen multiplayer mode. The developers are also exploring the possiblity of online play. —Steve T.

Chicken Little: Ace in Action

>>Developer: Avalanche
Publisher: Buena Vista Games

Based on the movie within the movie, Ace in Action is a sci-fi adventure that features on-foot platforming and shooting, tank battles, and space combat. Best of all: your ship is named the *Heifer*. —**Chris H.**



Rampage: Total Destruction

>>Developer: Pipeworks • Publisher: Midway

The Wii version of Rampage lets you destroy cities in comic fashion by swinging around the Wii Remote and Nunchuk. The game features new locales and monsters not in the GCN version. —**Chris H.**

SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab

>>Developer: Blitz Games • Publisher: THQ

The inspired lunacy of the *SpongeBob SquarePants* TV series has finally spawned an equally creative action game. Creature from the Krusty Krab explores the dream worlds of SpongeBob, Patrick, and Plankton, and brings us high-flying, enemy-slapping, motion-controlled hijinx with distinct art styles and actions for every section. —**George S.**

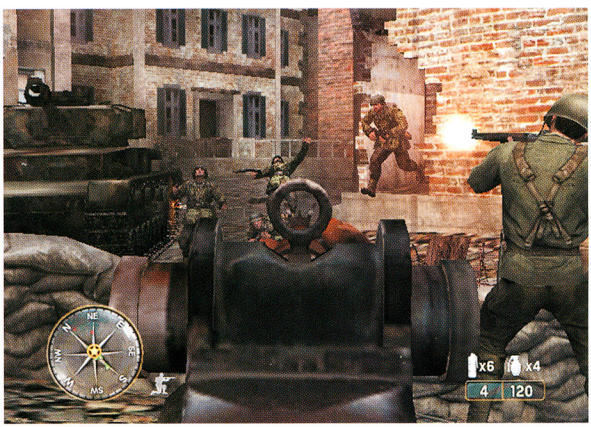
Call of Duty 3

STAFF PICK!

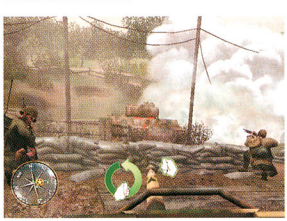
>>Developer: Treyarch • Publisher: Activision

Treyarch's newest installment in the popular World War II-based series is coming to Wii, and after extensive hands-on time with the game, we're glad to report that Call of Duty 3 is shaping up to be one of the console's most promising launch titles. The game drops players right in the middle of the Normandy Breakout campaign of 1944, where they will experience fierce first-person combat against the Axis forces controlling France. The Call of Duty series prides itself on its "living battlefield" atmosphere, achieved through a high level of detail and realistic AI; the Wii Remote helps take this concept to the next level by putting the rifle into your hands as you fight your way to victory. But Call of Duty 3 takes its use of the Wii Remote well beyond simply pointing at enemies and shooting them. Every aspect of the controls is tailored to the multifunctionality of the Wii Remote. Thrust the remote forward to conduct a melee attack with your rifle; twist the remote to peek around corners; press the A Button to pull the pin from a grenade, then lob it by performing a throwing motion with the Nunchuk attatchment. At certain points in the game, you'll find yourself in a close-range scuffle with an enemy, and you'll have to perform intuitive motions with the Wii Remote and the Nunchuk (such as punching or smacking someone with the butt of your rifle) to shake an enemy loose. During our play time, we were impressed with nearly every type of control we experienced over the two missions we saw. And we were even more impressed with the graphics. The game looks gorgeous in widescreen and at 480p resolution, showing off the game's lifelike textures and highly destructible environments. Call of Duty 3 proves that there's life left in the World War II first-person shooter genre, and stands out as one of the most exciting games at launch. —**Andy M.**

Call of Duty 3 is one of the nicest-looking titles you'll see come launch day.



The Wii version of CoD 3 uses the Remote to simulate all sorts of actions.



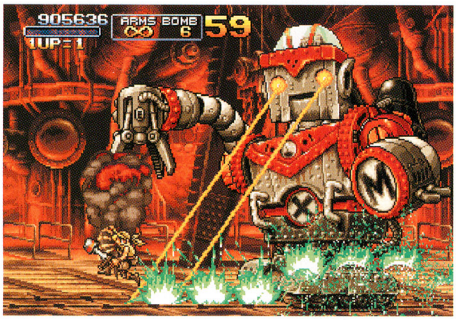
Metal Slug Anthology

STAFF PICK!

>>Developer: SNK/Terminal Reality
Publisher: SNK Playmore USA

As if arcade-perfect ports of Metal Slugs 1 through 5 and Metal Slug X weren't enough, SNK Playmore recently announced that Metal Slug Anthology will also include the technologically superior Metal Slug 6 (which will mark MS6's console debut in North America). That adds up to more than 35 levels of side-scrolling hand-drawn 2-D run-and-gun action, complete with numerous power-ups, a variety of vehicles, and two-player cooperative gameplay. The game offers more than five control setups, ranging from traditional (using a GCN controller sold seperately) to new but intuitive (holding the Wii Remote sideways like an NES pad and flicking it to throw grenades) to crazy and complex (playing the game one-handed using only the Nunchuk). Wii provides a whole new way to experience one of the most intense series in arcade history. —CHRIS H.

You'll fight for freedom wherever there's trouble, over land and sea and air—vehicles generously included.



Guns, grenades, and screen-filling robot bosses. What more do you need?

Cars

>>Developer: Rainbow Studios • Publisher: THQ

Take the reigns of Pixar's lively cars, based on the hit movie of the same name. Cars for Wii is similar to the GCN version (released back in June), but with modified controls. Like Excite Truck, you'll hold the Wii Remote sideways while tilting left and right to steer your vehicle. —ANDY M.

Flicking the Wii Remote upward to perform a jump is one of the game's cooler features.

Staff Picks: Chris H.

I don't really need everything to be radically new and different—I'm mostly looking forward to Wii-evolved versions of some of my favorite series.

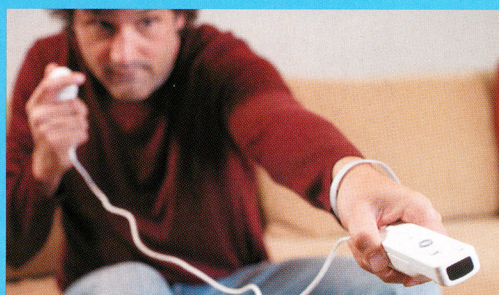
1. THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS
2. RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS
3. TRAUMA CENTER: SECOND OPINION
4. METAL SLUG ANTHOLOGY
5. ELEBITS

Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent

>>Developer: Ubisoft Montreal • Publisher: Ubisoft

While we found the GCN version of Double Agent disappointing, we're hoping the Wii version—which reportedly has you using the Wii Remote to master Sam Fisher's weapons and gadgets—will make up for it. —ANDY M.

Sam Fisher waits quietly for the next available stall.



The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy

>>Developer: High Voltage • Publisher: Midway

The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy on Wii builds upon the arena-based multiplayer melee combat of the GCN version, but adds nine new missions, eight new weapons, and more. You can choose from five Wii control configurations or use a GCN controller (sold seperately) if that's how you roll. —Chris H.

Staff Picks: Andy M.

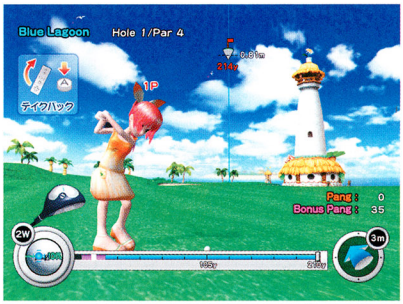
Look, mom: no arms! The only similarities I can find among any of my top five launch titles is the lack of appendages in Rayman and Wii Sports.

1. THE LEGEND OF ZELDA TWILIGHT PRINCESS
2. Wii SPORTS
3. TRAUMA CENTER: SECOND OPINION
4. TONY HAWK'S DOWNHILL JAM
5. RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS

Super Swing Golf

>>Developer: Tecmo • Publisher: Tecmo

Wii Sports won't be the only way to hit the greens. Super Swing Golf features full motion-sensitive controls—the backswing sets your shot's power, and the angle of the Wii Remote when you make contact with the ball determines whether it will hook or slice. Expect a bevy of multiplayer modes, as well as unlockable costumes from popular Tecmo franchises like Dead or Alive and Ninja Gaiden. —Steve T.



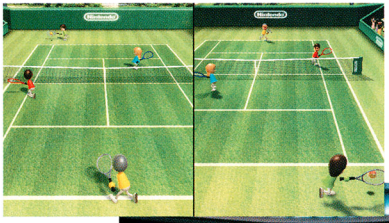
With its colorful graphics and arcade-inspired play modes, Super Swing is more Mario Golf than Tiger Woods.

Wii Sports

STAFF PICK!

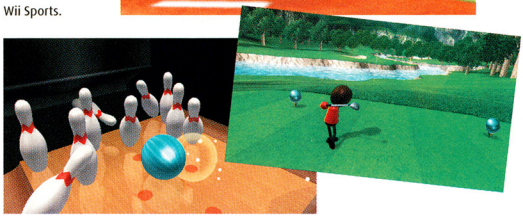
>>Developer: Nintendo • Publisher: Nintendo

For the first time in recent memory, a console will launch with a game bundled in. Actually, make that five games bundled in—Wii Sports will bring you its own special takes on tennis, bowling, baseball, golf, and boxing. We've already talked quite a bit about the first four sports, but in the end, boxing may be the best of the bunch. You can spar against a CPU-controlled pugilist or take on a human opponent in a heart-pounding split-screen bout. Using the Wii Remote and Nunchuk as your fists, you can throw a variety of punches depending on your arm angle, as well as hold your hands high and low to protect your head and body. You can even lean left and right to dodge your ringmate's jabs. Wii Sports will give gamers a glimpse of the potential in the Wii, and a good cardio workout, to boot. —Chris S.



It's double the pleasure in Wii Sports Tennis.

Whether you're picking up a spare or throwing the uncle Charlie, you're bound to have a ball with Wii Sports.



It's Good To Be King

NINTENDO DS.

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Marvel: Ultimate Alliance

>>Developer: Vicarious Visions
Publisher: Activision

Using the Wii Remote won't actually let you shoot spider webs or wield the Hammer of the Gods, but it will get you one step closer than you've been before. Marvel: Ultimate Alliance puts you in control of some of the most famous comic book heroes as they try to thwart Dr. Doom's evil plans. —**Chris S.**

Staff Picks: Scott P.

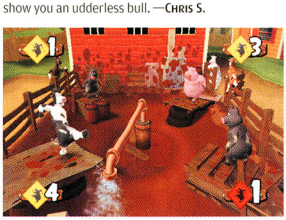
Wii is about action, and my picks showcase creative, fun play control styles that everyone should try.

1. **THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS**
2. **SUPER MONKEY BALL: BANANA BLITZ**
3. **MADDEN NFL 07**
4. **RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS**
5. **Wii SPORTS**

Barnyard

>>Developer: Blue Tongue • Publisher: THQ

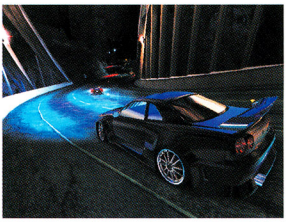
The Wii adaptation of the movie is complete with new controls and Wii-centric minigames. Show me someone who doesn't like dancing cows, and I'll show you an udderless bull. —**Chris S.**



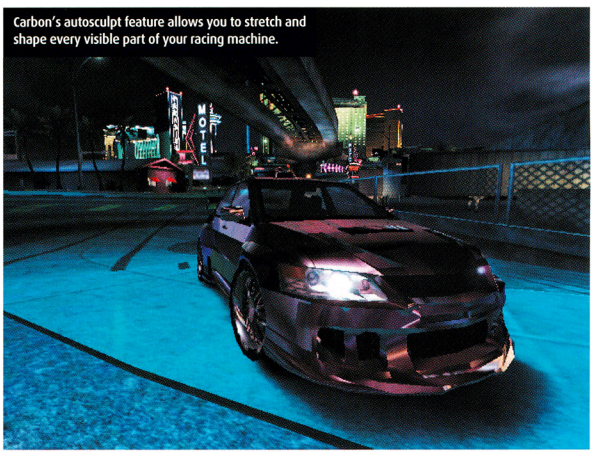
Need for Speed: Carbon

>>Developer: EA Black Box•Publisher: EA

At night, the city streets and canyon roads of Need for Speed: Carbon are dominated by rival racing crews carving out their own sections of the sprawling game world. You play the part of a street racer returning to the scene with your eye on all territories. Your starting position depends on whether you align yourself with the American Muscle, Exotic, or Tuner car class. If you choose muscle cars as your go-to vehicles, you'll enjoy pure acceleration and power. Climb into an exotic car and you'll experience a blazing top speed. If you're part of the tuner group, you'll have the best handling of the bunch. For all cars, steering is accomplished with the Wii Remote in both hands: the Control Pad under your left thumb and the 2 Button (the accelerator) under your right thumb. You tilt the Wii Remote as you would a steering wheel. To keep steering under control, the developers have set standard steering at a level that favors subtle turns. If you really want to crank it, you can press the B Button to set Oversteer mode, and turn sharply with little effort. The Control Pad-triggered emergency brake also lets you turn on a dime. You'll need that precise control to make your way through the game's 160 events and steer clear of the authorities. If you achieve goals in the campaign and single-event modes, you'll earn reward cards, which unlock new cars and parts. —**George S.**



Many of the game's events take place on canyon roads, where one mistake can put you over the edge—game over.



Motion-based Wii control makes it easy to take curves.

Red Steel

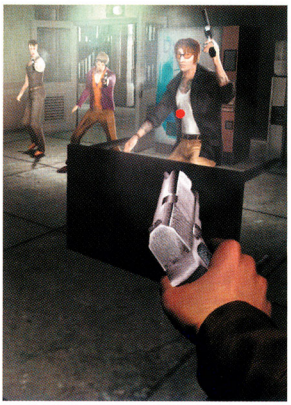
STAFF PICK!

>>Developer: Ubisoft Paris
Publisher: Ubisoft

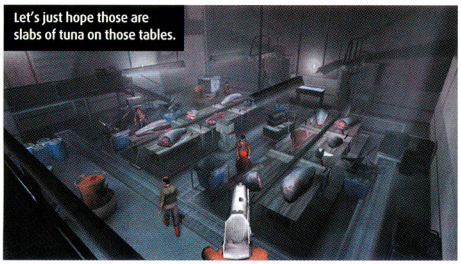
Coming out of E3, reaction to Ubisoft's ambitious FPS was decidedly mixed. Everyone could see vast potential in the title, but the developers were still working out quite a few kinks. But the first true shooter built exclusively for Wii should be expected to have some bumps along the road.

Fast-forward to the present, and Red Steel feels like a whole new game. A revamped art style provides a more realistic flair to the Japan-based title, blending beautiful, understated old-world backdrops with the high-tech, neon-bathed Tokyo streets. Character design has also received a facelift—the 2D-ish enemies of old have been replaced by more-realistic models.

Along with the visuals, the game's controls have been significantly refined. You use the Wii Remote to guide the camera and aim your gun simultaneously; when you move the targeting reticle near the edge of the screen, your view will follow in the same direction. To zoom in for a high-accuracy shot, you thrust the Wii Remote toward the screen—the faster you zoom in, the more magnified your target will be, making headshots a piece of cake. You'll use the Nunchuk in a variety of ways, as well. The control stick moves the hero around, and shaking the Nunchuk serves a variety of purposes—you can reload your weapon, pick up ammo, or interact with the environment (such as opening doors) by giving the Nunchuk a quick flick of the wrist.



Swordfighting remains a key part of the gameplay. The Wii Remote acts as a sword and the Nunchuk acts as a defensive dagger; you use the remote and Nunchuk alternately to attack and parry against aggressive, smart foes. If you gain the upper hand in the duel, you'll have a decision to make—strike the coup de grace against your helpless enemy, or show mercy and let him live to fight again. Your decision affects the attitudes of the people you meet later in the game.

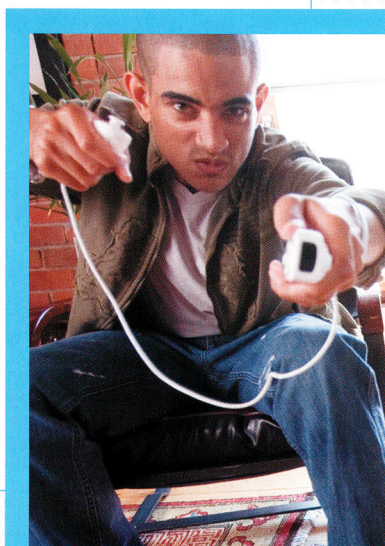


Let's just hope those are slabs of tuna on those tables.

A lot is being made of the controls (and with good reason), but don't forget that Red Steel is a full-fledged gaming experience, with interesting characters and plot. You play as an American who must penetrate the shadowy world of the Yakuza, the organized crime syndicate that has infiltrated every level of Japanese society. The Yakuza is not as organized as it seems, however—you have to cultivate the trust of clashing groups within the organization to help you against its leader. The quest will take you from corporate boardrooms to ancient temples and all points in between. The developers stress that they don't want Red Steel to be simply an action game; they want players to follow along with the main character as he becomes enlightened about Japan's rich culture.

Watch your back—the streets of Tokyo are dangerous, especially for a *gaijin* like yourself.

Combining groundbreaking gameplay mechanics with a compelling story, Red Steel has the makings of a cutting-edge launch title. —**Chris S.**



Avatar: The Last Airbender

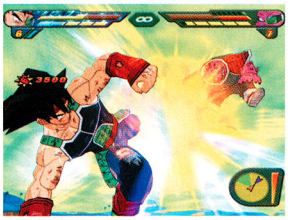
>>Developer: Studio Oz • Publisher: THQ

There isn't enough room here—or possibly in this entire magazine—to explain Avatar's plot, but the merits of its immersive adventure and versatile combat system should entice any gamer. —CHRIS S.

Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 2

>>Developer: Spike • Publisher: Atari

With more than 100 characters and the ability to physically re-create moves using the Nunchuk and Wii Remote, Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 2 might be the ultimate Dragon Ball game. —CHRIS H.



Open Season

>>Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Publisher: Ubisoft

Though movie adaptations aren't always a sure bet, linear adventure Open Season is a treat. Tossing rabbits at hunters, riding a floating outhouse, and shaking porcupines from your behind (a multiplayer minigame) has never been so much fun. —GEORGE S.

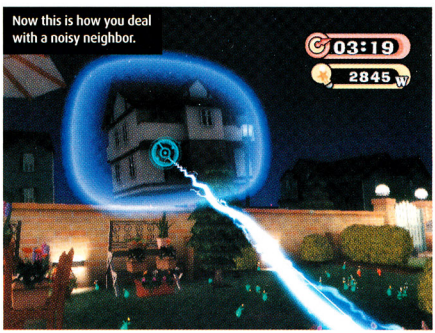
Elebits

STAFF PICK!

>>Developer: Konami
Publisher: Konami

Elebits is one of those titles that could work only on Wii. It allows for a whole new level of interactivity by using the Wii Remote as a "capture gun" to manipulate everything in the environment, from dropping a piece of bread in the toaster to flinging your neighbor's house into the stratosphere. It's all in the name of capturing mischievous little critters called Elebits. As you collect the adorable creatures, they'll provide the necessary energy for your various appliances and eventually open paths to new areas. They'll also power up your capture gun, allowing you to wreak havoc on a much greater scale (which gives the game a strong Katamari Damacy vibe). The aesthetic is pretty simple, but that seems a fair trade-off for the unprecedented amount of interactivity with your environment, and what appears to be a pretty robust physics engine (items bounce and collide with each other convincingly, you can stack objects on top of one another, etc.).

Judging by what we've played thus far, Elebits seems to possess a unique charm, and there's something strangely therapeutic about tossing stuff all over the place and trashing your kitchen or patio. Whether it ultimately amounts to much more than a glorified tech demo remains to be seen, but this one has sleeper hit written all over it. —STEVE T.

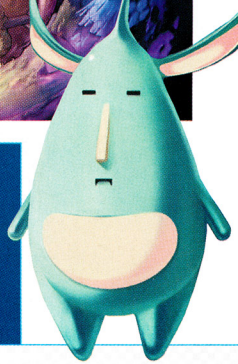


Now this is how you deal with a noisy neighbor.

Staff Picks: Chris S.

Epic adventures, high-speed racing, shooters, party games, and surgery simulations . . . this is gonna be one amazing console launch.

1. THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS
2. RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS
3. EXCITE TRUCK
4. CALL OF DUTY 3
5. TRAUMA CENTER: SECOND OPINION



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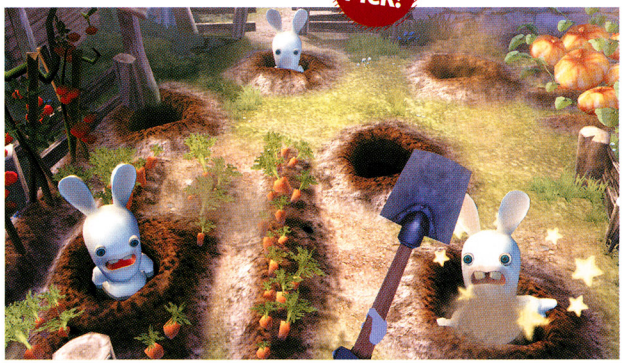
Rayman Raving Rabbids

>>Developer: Ubisoft Montpellier • Publisher: Ubisoft

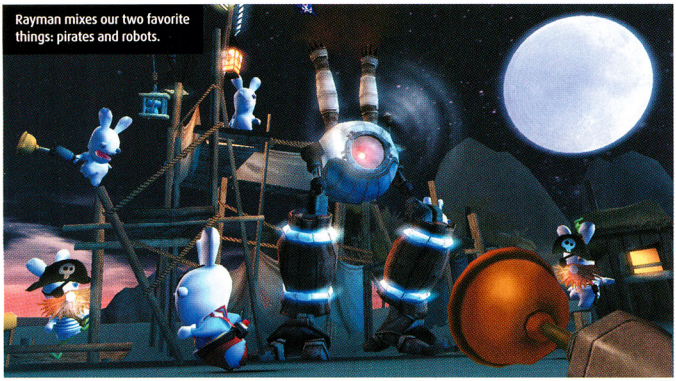
STAFF PICK!



Whatever you're expecting from Rayman Raving Rabbids, forget it—you're going to see stuff beyond your wildest imagination. From what we've heard from Ubisoft, it seems the developers at Michel Ancel's prestigious Montpellier studio have basically been given carte blanche to create whatever comes into their creative heads.

In Raving Rabbids, our limbless hero once again finds himself incarcerated. This time, his captors are crazed bunnies who have their sights set on world domination. To free himself from their bonds, and eventually thwart their plans, Rayman has to earn their trust in a series of trials. The half-witted Rabbids are funny just to look at, but when they start running and screaming, they're nothing short of hilarious.

In one of the stages of the most recent demo we played, we guided Rayman through an old-west town, blasting wild-eyed Rabbids with a six-shooter that fires toilet plungers. Rayman moves on his own, so you mostly use the Wii Remote to aim and fire your plunger-pistol.



Rayman mixes our two favorite things: pirates and robots.

Immediately after that stage, we got to try our hand at one of the much-hyped rhythm games. In the challenge, we had to shake the Wii Remote and Nunchuk in time to Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" while Rayman did the hustle on a disco stage. It wasn't particularly hard, but it was a lot of fun—we expect the difficulty to ramp up quite a bit in later songs.

We'd really like to meet the developer who came up with the next game we played—a cow-throwing game in which you toss the barnyard animal like a track-and-field hammer. You hold down the A Button on the Wii Remote, then swing the Nunchuk over your head as fast as possible. Once you've built up enough speed, you let go of the button to send the frightened heifer sailing. It's as fun as it is funny.

While all the games have the humor we'd expect from this team, they also present some very tough challenges unlike anything we've seen before. In one particular game, you stand behind the counter of a seaside tiki bar; you must fend off snorkel-wearing Rabbids as they emerge from the ocean by filling their snorkel masks with tropical cocktail. That's the easy part—while you're aiming, you have to shake the Nunchuk constantly to maintain the squirter's pressure. As we waited our turn to play, we couldn't understand why the people trying the demo before us were having such a tough time; however, the act of holding the squirter steady in one hand while shaking the Nunchuk furiously in the other was much more difficult than it looked.

Many of the game's activities are still under wraps, and the team will likely be adding new stuff right up until launch. Ubisoft has already promised more than 70 different events, including multiplayer challenges for up to four players simultaneously. On the basis of Wii innovation alone, Raving Rabbids is a must-have—no game on the horizon will pack in as much new control. If you're looking to see how the Wii can change gaming, look no further than Rayman. —**Chris S.**

A new Rayman game from Michel Ancel? When pigs fly!

Staff Picks: George S.

In between sessions with the epic Zelda, I'm looking forward to some pick-up-and-play fun. Nothing delivers that faster than Excite Truck.

1. **THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS**
2. **MADDEN NFL 07**
3. **EXCITE TRUCK**
4. **RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS**
5. **TONY HAWK'S DOWNHILL JAM**

Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam

STAFF PICK!

>>Developer: Toys for Bob • Publisher: Activision

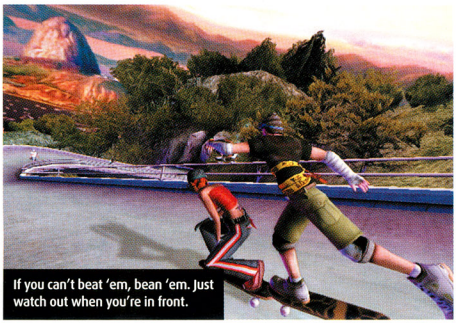
Don't think of Downhill Jam as simply another Tony Hawk game; a slew of never-before-seen tracks and new moves bring an all-new experience to the venerable franchise. You'll shoot down locales that span the globe in a variety of competitions, including races, trick events, and last-man-standing challenges.

When you're playing Downhill Jam, you hold the Wii Remote sideways. You rock the Wii Remote left and right to turn, as well as to balance during grinds. When you crash (and you will plenty of times), you can shake the Wii Remote to get back up on your board more quickly.

The burt slide—a move that was introduced to the series in Tony Hawk's American Wasteland—is a prominent feature in Downhill Jam: many of the corners you'll come across are too tight for you to navigate comfortably, so you'll need to use the burt slide to whip through streets without losing speed. —**Chris S.**

Grinding opportunities are everywhere.

As you progress through the stages, you'll get boards designed for different purposes, such as longboards for high-speed racing.



If you can't beat 'em, bean 'em. Just watch out when you're in front.

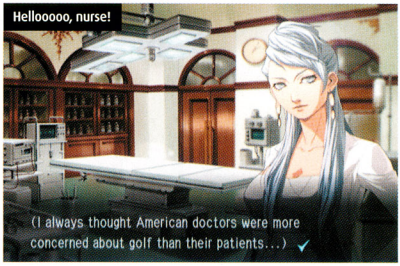
Trauma Center: Second Opinion

>>Developer: Atlus • Publisher: Atlus

After playing Trauma Center: Second Opinion, I feel like I'm ready to perform actual surgery. I've delicately zapped malignant polyps from my patient's trachial passage, then meticulously sewn up the incision I made, and now I'm ready for the real thing. While pointing the Wii Remote directly at the patient, it takes quick reflexes and a steady hand to perform the operations—just like in real life.

Although the procedures are essentially the same as those in the DS hit Trauma Center: Under the Knife, the Wii Remote makes Second Opinion feel completely fresh. In addition, the use of the Nunchuk to switch quickly between your surgical tools makes the pace even more frenetic and fun. —**Chris S.**

STAFF PICK!



Ice Age 2: The Meltdown

>>Developer: Eurocom • Publisher: VU Games

Prehistoric varmint Scrat skitters and digs his way through the same adventure that he endured for the GCN version of Ice Age 2, only this time many of his actions are motion-controlled. They include Wii Remote-swiping attacks and a nut-stomping move triggered by a hammering action. —**George S.**

Scrat and Manny are the big and small of Ice Age 2. The Wii game sports higher frame rates than the GCN version, making for smoother animation.

Happy Feet

>>Developer: A2M • Publisher: Midway

Happy Feet has you tilting the Wii Remote to steer penguin protagonist Mumble through swimming and belly-sliding stages, then shaking it to the beat of DDR-style arrows to get his groove on. The game is based on an upcoming animated film, and stars Elijah Wood as the voice of Mumble. —**Steve T.**

Monster 4x4: World Circuit

>>Developer: Ubisoft Barcelona
Publisher: Ubisoft

The Wii version of this former Xbox racer lets you swing the Wii Remote in various patterns to perform different stunts. The game offers split-screen races for up to four players, as well as three multiplayer mini-games: Monster Soccer, Monster Combat, and Monster Ball. —**Steve T.**

The Ant Bully

>>Developer: A2M • Publisher: Midway

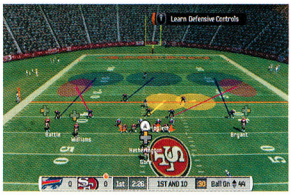
We weren't terribly enthralled with the GCN version of this film adaptation (it scored a 5.0 in Volume 208), so hopefully Midway addresses some of the problems while porting it to Wii. How the game will make use of the Wii Remote remains a mystery. —**Steve T.**

Madden NFL 07

STAFF PICK!

>>Developer: EA Canada • Publisher: EA

Wii is starting very strong in the sports category. Not only does the console include Wii Sports as a pack-in, but the most popular sports game in North America will be available on launch day. EA has taken the concept of motion control and has run with it for Madden NFL 07. The game lets you do everything that a pro football player does by making intuitive moves of the Wii Remote and Nunchuk. Pull the Wii Remote back to have the center hike the ball, signal for a receiver using the Control Pad and A Button, then let the ball fly by flicking forward. The force of your motion determines if the pass will be a normal-strength dish, a bullet, or a lob. Controlling the running game (one of the big improvements for the franchise's 2007 entry) is a two-handed activity. You move the ball carrier using the Control Stick, juke with a jerk of the Nunchuk (left, right, or back) and stiff-arm with movements of the Wii Remote. Defensive play is all about motion control, too, allowing you to do everything from tackle by moving both the Wii Remote and the Nunchuk in the direction of the target, to attempt an interception by lifting the controllers into the air. Your movement can be subtle, or big and expressive. The game's programming detects various performances of each type of move, and interprets your intentions smartly.



Before the play, you can look at routes, or keep them hidden.

As is always the case with a Madden game, the multiplayer aspect is huge in NFL 07. The Wii version lets up to four players participate and offers three exclusive activities that are best enjoyed with a group. They include the Kicking Combine minigame, in which those who aren't kicking can influence the direction of the wind by pumping their controllers, and the 2 on 2 minigame, which replicates playground football. The game is a must-have for pigskin proponents. —**George S.**

The Wii Remote is your kicker's leg. Point down, then swing upward to send the ball flying.

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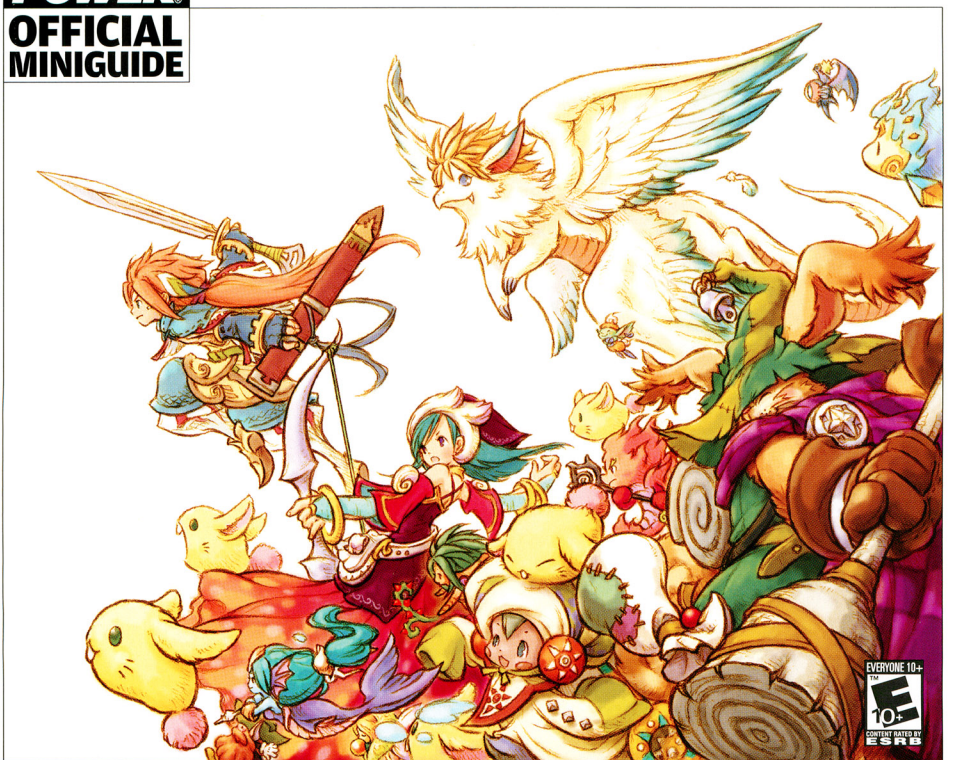

Stickin' It to the Mana

In Children of Mana for DS, nature has run amok. Use our walkthrough and gem-fusion tips to end the chaos.

By Chris Hoffman

Mana itself has spun out of control in the latest chapter of Square Enix's renowned action-RPG series. Fortunately, everything you need to restore order can be found right here: a walkthrough for all eight of the game's dungeons (including boss battles), and gem-fusing tips to obtain the most-useful power-ups. When the going gets tough, feel free to return to a previous level to stock up on experience and money, and don't forget: you can team up with three other players to aid your quest.

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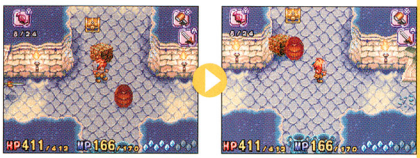
The Mana Tower

The Mana Tower is the game's introductory level, so most of the enemies aren't too tough. If you get injured, however, heal with a Gumdrop (or healing magic if you brought Wisp or Luna). You can deflect archers' attacks by holding down the sword button to parry.

Boxed In

To get past the boxes that mimic your movements, push or knock barrels into their paths. You can also smash them with approximately 90 sword hits.



Boss

Xangar

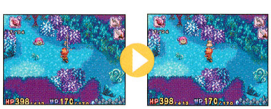
In the first phase of the battle, watch the radar to avoid Xangar's swoop attacks, and hit it with your sword when it stops to cast magic. In the second phase, stay near the northern edge of the plateau and parry its projectile attacks, and continue to attack Xangar when it casts spells.

Star Lake

Star Lake may seem serene, but it can be extremely deadly. The monsters can cause a lot of damage with their projectile attacks if you aren't well-equipped, and painful spikes line the ground. Also, watch out for patches of moving grass that reach out and grab you; in a multiplayer game, an ally can cut you loose.

Off the Hook

Use the flail's grapple ability (hold down the flail button for a few seconds) to pull yourself over spikes and grab distant items. You can also find items in bushes if you grapple them.



Boss

Galem

Use a charged flail attack to grapple the plant orbs out of Galem's rotating shield, and destroy them one by one. A bright-green flash signifies that large vines will emerge from the ground and strike, so keep running to avoid them. When Galem has only three orbs left, it will send them all after you at once; destroy them, attack the boss while it's vulnerable, then back off before the shield regenerates.

GEM FUSION

Attack

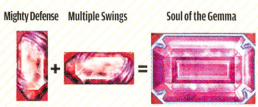
Attack gems are recognized by their red color. Not only can they give you additional attack power, but they can modify your attacks to make them more effective. Note that although we provide only one recipe per gem fusion, there are often multiple combinations that result in the same gem.

Sword Expertise (Size: 2x1)

When it comes to attacking, the sword is arguably the best weapon you can use, and the Sword Expertise gem brings out its full potential. The gem increases your sword's Attack value by 8, lets you hit twice with each swing, and allows you to unleash a shock wave when finishing a combo.

Soul of the Gemma (Size: 3x2)

The Soul of the Gemma boosts your Attack value by a whopping 25 points and boosts your Defense by 10. The trade-off is the gem's large size; you won't be able to use many other gems unless you get a bigger gem frame. If you want maximum attack power, however, this gem does the trick.



Aquisition

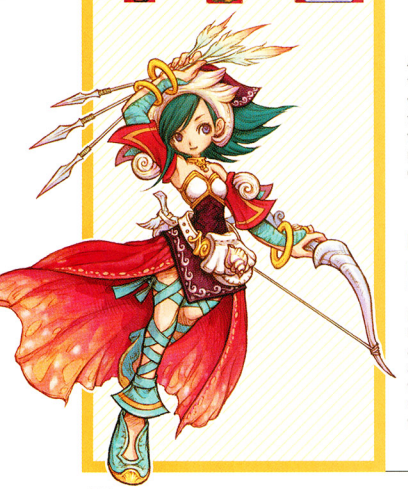
Orange gems affect the things you acquire during battle, such as items, experience points, and money. If you want to level up faster or get rich quick, acquisition gems are the way to go. Acquisition gems can't be found naturally; they can only be acquired by fusing red and yellow gems.

Heart of Progress (Size: 2x2)

The Heart of Progress gem provides a 50 percent increase in the amount of experience you acquire from defeating enemies. You'll likely need to spend some time building your levels to increase your stats and equip the best gear, and the Heart of Progress speeds that process considerably.

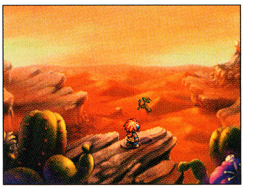
Drain Soul (Size: 2x2)

The Drain Soul gem automatically restores your HP and MP equivalent to three percent of the damage you inflict on monsters. The effect can really add up and save you a lot on HP- and MP-restoring items, especially if used in conjunction with a gem that adds multiple hits to your attacks.



Fiery Sands

The Fiery Sands area is longer than previous ones, so stock up on healing items, especially poison-curing Stardust Herbs, before entering. Though some enemies are out of reach, you can slay them by putting your newly acquired bow to good use, after which you can nab their treasure with the flail's grapple.



Quick Sand

Normally you can't cross the fast-moving sand rivers without the Virtue of Balance gem, but if you get slammed by an enemy or a ricocheting cactus, you can make it across.

Boss

Thaydol

The good news about Thaydol is that it isn't as powerful as it looks. The bad news is that its attacks are pretty tough to avoid. Shoot the boss with arrows at point-blank range, but be ready to move at any time: When it pulls one arm back, run down and away from the arm to avoid the blow, and when it pulls its head back and roars, run to either side to dodge a dual-fisted strike. Back off to avoid Thaydol's projectiles.

Ice Citadel

The Ice Citadel is treacherous due to both challenging enemies and ice that impedes your movement. Proceed slowly through the citadel so you aren't overwhelmed by foes, and use your hammer to smash the ice blocks. Be careful around the light-blue crystals—they'll turn you into a snowman.

A Slippery Slope

You can't change direction on the blue ice patches unless you're equipped with the Virtue of Balance gem. However, if you run at the ice diagonally, you can maneuver around corners to reach otherwise-inaccessible areas.

Boss

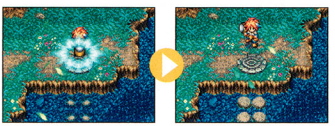
Landmund

Landmund is vulnerable only when the face in the center of its body emerges as it's preparing for a spell or projectile attack. When the face begins to suck in air, go with the flow and strike Landmund a couple times with your strongest weapon, then back off to avoid the projectiles. The monster's rolling attack can be devastating, so when it curls into a ball, watch the radar and stay out of Landmund's path.

Brightwood

The biggest hazards in Brightwood are the green mushrooms that emit poisonous gas; destroy them from a distance or slam enemies into them with the hammer—you'll poison your foes without being afflicted. In some areas, you'll find X-shaped cracks that signify vicious roots, but you'll remain safe if you go between the cracks.

Hammer Time



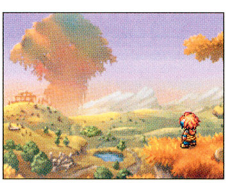
Some pathways are inaccessible until you raise them out of the rivers, so use a charged hammer blow to pound the nearby switches. The hammer is also useful for clearing away tree stumps.

Boss

Mana Storm

Although the Mana Storm is accompanied by four energy balls, the balls are pretty harmless as long as you keep your distance. You can, however, use the hammer to slam the energy balls into the Mana Storm, which will penetrate the boss's near-impregnable vortex. When the vortex subsides and exposes the red core, charge in and attack the boss directly.

The Ruins



The first time you head to the ruins, you'll access them directly from the village. The area is packed with powerful enemies, the most dangerous of which are the large, bull-like beasts, so try to eliminate them first. Be especially wary of the spikes hidden under the flowers; a Virtue of Safety gem (see p. 76) will negate their damage.

Something for Everyone

Many of the skills you learned in previous levels will be put to good use in the ruins. You'll encounter items you can grapple out of bushes, plants to smash that conceal Gleamwells, and switches you'll hammer to create bridges. Pink versions of the grab-happy vines from Star Lake also return, but these ones cause minor damage while they hold you.

Boss

Revenants

When the Revenants have combined into a large monster, your attacks can't hurt them. Try to lure the beast into smashing one of the five gold-tipped pillars, then use your hammer to knock the broken pillar tip into the monster to damage it. When the Revenants are separated, you can damage only the one with glowing red eyes.

GEM FUSION

Defense

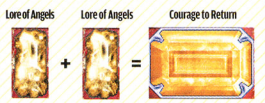
Defense gems, recognized by their yellow hue, increase your protection against physical attacks and magic, and also enhance the effect of healing items. Many of the benefits are designed specifically for multiplayer mode, so consider yellow-gem fusion before adventuring with pals.

Glorious Blessing (Size: 3x3)

You'll never have to worry about your HP or MP levels with Glorious Blessing equipped. The gem automatically restores 6 HP and 6 MP every three seconds. It is huge, however; you won't be able to use it until you acquire the game's biggest gem frame.

Courage to Return (Size: 3x2)

Normally when you run out of HP in single-player mode, that's it—back to the village you go. But if you have a Courage to Return gem, you'll be revived automatically with an Angel's Grail should you fall in battle. As long as you have a supply of Angel's Grails, you can't lose.



Intelligence

Blue gems are considered intelligence gems—for enhancing your magic capabilities—but gems in this category focus on upgrading your elemental spirit partner more than your IQ. Intelligence gems are most useful for granting new spells and lowering MP costs.

Might of the Spirits (Size: 1x2)

Might of the Spirits raises all elemental spells (both attack and support) to level two, no matter which elemental spirit you've selected as your partner. Although only one recipe is listed below, there are many combinations. Pride of the Spirits offers the same effect, but its shape differs.

GEM FUSION

Status

The dungeons in Children of Mana are filled with hazards that cause negative status effects and otherwise impede your progress, but green status gems can put a stop to that. Like acquisition gems, you can't find status gems naturally; they're available only through fusion.

Ultimate Protection (Size: 3x2)

The Ultimate Protection gem is one of the most useful gems in the game—it blocks all negative status effects. The gem is big, but the payoff is worth it.

Virtue of Safety (Size: 2x2)

Tired of taking damage from those darn spikes? Then equip the Virtue of Safety gem to make spikes safe to walk on. Your feet will thank you.

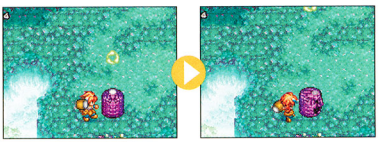
Virtue of Balance (Size: 2x2)

Moving sand and slippery ice are no problem once you equip the Virtue of Balance gem. You'll be able to negotiate treacherous terrain with no trouble at all.

Path of Life

If you don't already have a top-of-the-line bow, buy one before entering the Path of Life—it's great for keeping flying enemies at bay. Avoid the purple weeds that cause random negative status effects, as well as the blue cracks in the ground that house malevolent plant life.

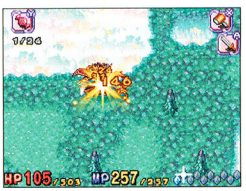
Elemental Master



The purple elemental-attack pillars can cause a lot of trouble, but if you hit them with your hammer, you can change their firing direction.

Boss

Mana Lord



The Mana Lord's first form shouldn't pose much of a challenge. Circle the boss to dodge his attacks, and hit him whenever you have an opening. In his second form, the Mana Lord is much faster and can deal massive damage quickly, so keep your distance from the boss and strike when he pauses to cast a spell.

Cosmic Rift

All your skills will be put to the test in the Cosmic Rift. Use the blue orbs as weapons by hammering them into enemies, and be sure to destroy enemy generators as soon as you can. As always, be wary of ground hazards, and watch out for the blue eyeball creature—it packs a mean projectile attack.

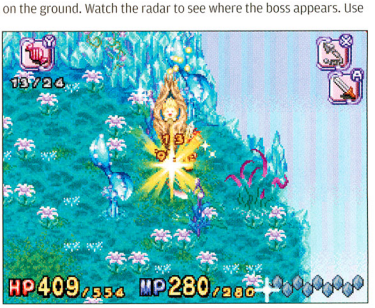
Friendly Fight

In the ninth zone of the Cosmic Rift, you'll square off against some familiar faces in a mid-boss battle. As long as you don't get surrounded, you shouldn't have much trouble winning.

Boss

Scion of Mana

The Scion of Mana alternates between two attack methods. In one method, the boss fills the area with flowers and teleports to one of the green patches on the ground. Watch the radar to see where the boss appears. Use an enhanced sword or the flail to mow down the flowers and reach the boss, then attack it as quickly as possible before it calls in a group of hostile plants as backup. In its second attack method, the scion creates a maze of indestructible weeds before teleporting to the northern section of the area. Vines will reach down and attempt to grab you, but if you keep running, they'll miss. If you're near the boss, you can shoot it with arrows, but the vines will likely grab you for your efforts.



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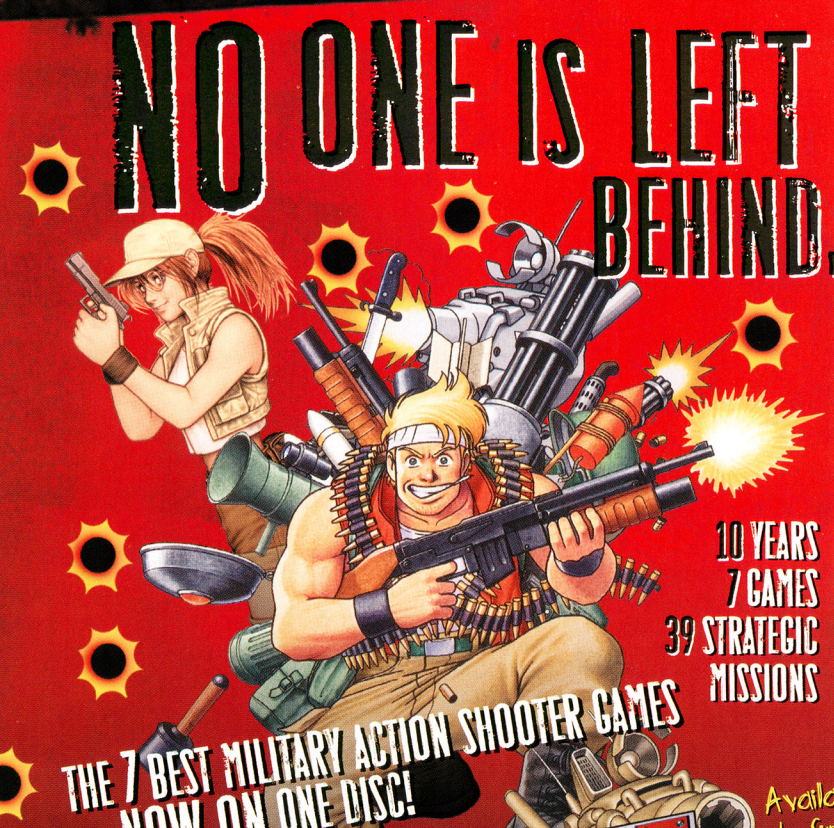

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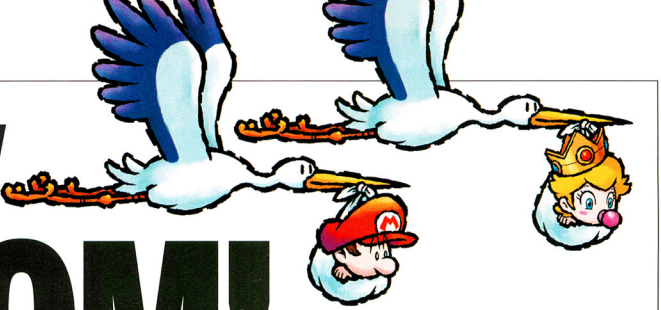
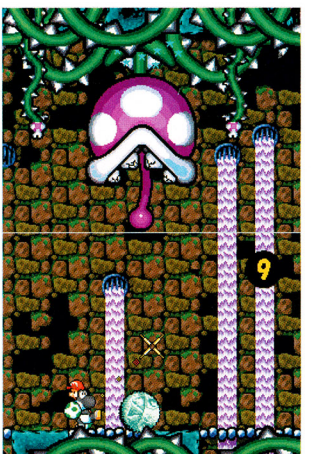
Baby BOOM!



Bootie-wearing dinos are on alert again after another Magikoopa kidnapping spree. Yoshi's Island DS will soon prove that babysitting isn't for wusses.

By Drew Williams

Kamek the Magikoopa is the kind of repeat offender who demands the creation of a get-tough, law-and-order government in the Mushroom Kingdom. In Yoshi's Island: Super Mario Advance 3, the broom-riding miscreant plucked innocent babies from their beds as part of some crackpot scheme hatched by King Bowser. To right the wrong, the Yoshis bore the crime-fighting load on their backs—in the form of Baby Mario—and fought their way through six tough worlds of puzzles and platforms. Now that everything has returned to normal, Kamek is back with pretty much the same MO: steal the babies, force the Yoshis to navigate many dangerous worlds, then toss in a few bosses for good measure. What's changed is the Yoshis' approach to crime fighting. Using convenient new Stork Stops, the Yoshis can switch between five different babies, all of whom possess unique gifts that will help them in their quest. This month we introduce you to the heroic toddlers and their mounts.



Yoshi's Island DS takes advantage of both screens to give you a huge play area.

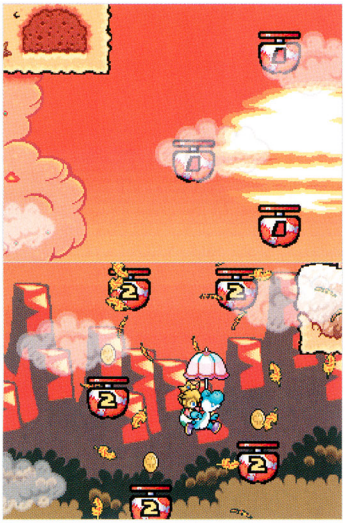
Name:
Baby Mario

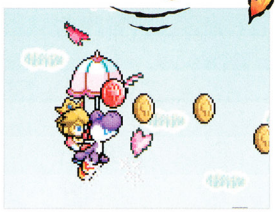
Hair:
Brown

Distinguishing characteristics:
SuperSpeed
Block-Busting Skills

Baby Mario is a veteran of Yoshi-powered platforming, and he's still the go-to tot for much of Yoshi's Island DS. Many levels have coin-laden M Blocks that are invisible to all but Baby Mario. He also has superspeed that you'll need to accomplish time-dependent tasks and to avoid falling blocks. For much of the game, Mario is the only baby who can bounce an egg into hard-to-reach spots. To top it off, he can transform into Superstar Mario, a pint-sized superhero who can run up walls and survive even the most hostile environments the game throws at you.

Yoshi and Baby Mario face an uphill battle to recover the babies. It's the most challenging Yoshi game to date.





Name:
Baby Peach

Hair:
Blond

Distinguishing Characteristics:
Wind-Powered Flight
Enhanced Fluttering Ability

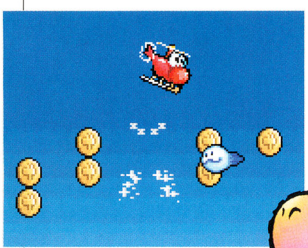
At first, Baby Peach may seem like the light-weight of the nursery, but you'll come to appreciate her buoyancy on breezy levels that require seat-of-your-pants aerial action. When you pop open her parasol, she'll grab the air currents and soar to coins, flowers, and otherwise-unreachable platforms. She also comes in handy when you need to jump and flutter for long distances. She'll fall eventually, but her parasol gives her a slight advantage over the other babies.

Name:
Yoshi

Hair:
None

Distinguishing Characteristics:
Egg Production
Morphing

You'll control many Yoshis throughout your adventure, and each of them is named Yoshi. It's a zoological mystery, but for some reason Yoshi's can instantly digest most enemies and turn them into eggs. They can then toss those eggs to defeat other enemies, acquire items, and activate special blocks. When they touch Morph Bubbles, Yoshis can transform into special vehicles, such as a submarine, a mole tank, and a helicopter.



Name:
Baby DK

Hair:
Yes

Distinguishing Characteristics:
Swinging/Climbing Abilities
Explosive Eggs

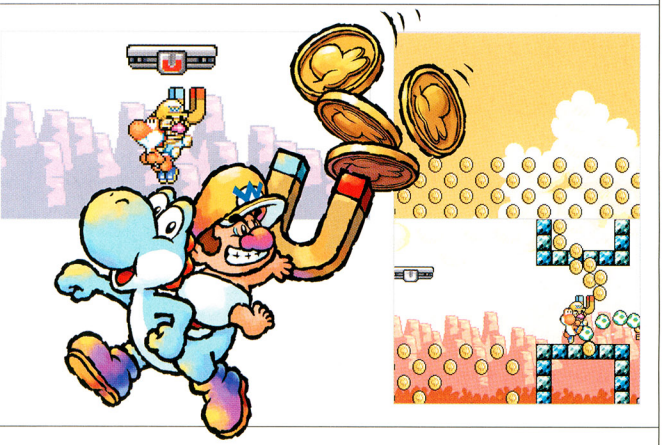
Baby DK has a bevy of special skills that make him arguably the most versatile character in the game. First and foremost, he has the unique ability to climb and swing on vines and a few other surfaces. More surprisingly, he renders Yoshi's eggs explosive on contact. He also has a dash attack that can smash through soft stone (and some enemies), and an extrapowerful ground-pound attack.

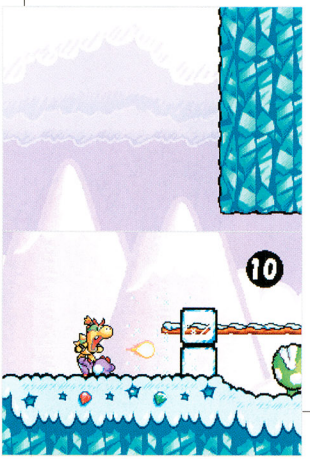
Name:
Baby Wario

Hair:
Brown

Distinguishing Characteristics:
Powerful Magnet
Bouncing Eggs

Wario isn't much of a joiner, but it seems he couldn't resist the lure of all the easy money on Yoshi's Island. He even brought along his trusty magnet to help him scoop up coins from a distance—even through walls! The device is useful for attracting metal platforms and pulling metal crates. He can also bounce eggs off of most surfaces, a trait he shares with Baby Mario and Baby Bowser.





Name:
Baby Bowser

Hair:
Red

Distinguishing Characteristics:
Fire Breath
Bouncing Eggs

Here's a shocker: Baby Bowser appears for a few levels late in the game—as a good guy! He has just one major ability, but it's a doozy: fire breath allows you to melt through ice and defeat tough enemies quickly. It also reduces the need for egg collection (which is good, since Yoshi can't swallow enemies when Baby Bowser is aboard). Why is the baby Koopa King part of the team? You'll have to play the game to find out!

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CRAVE entertainment

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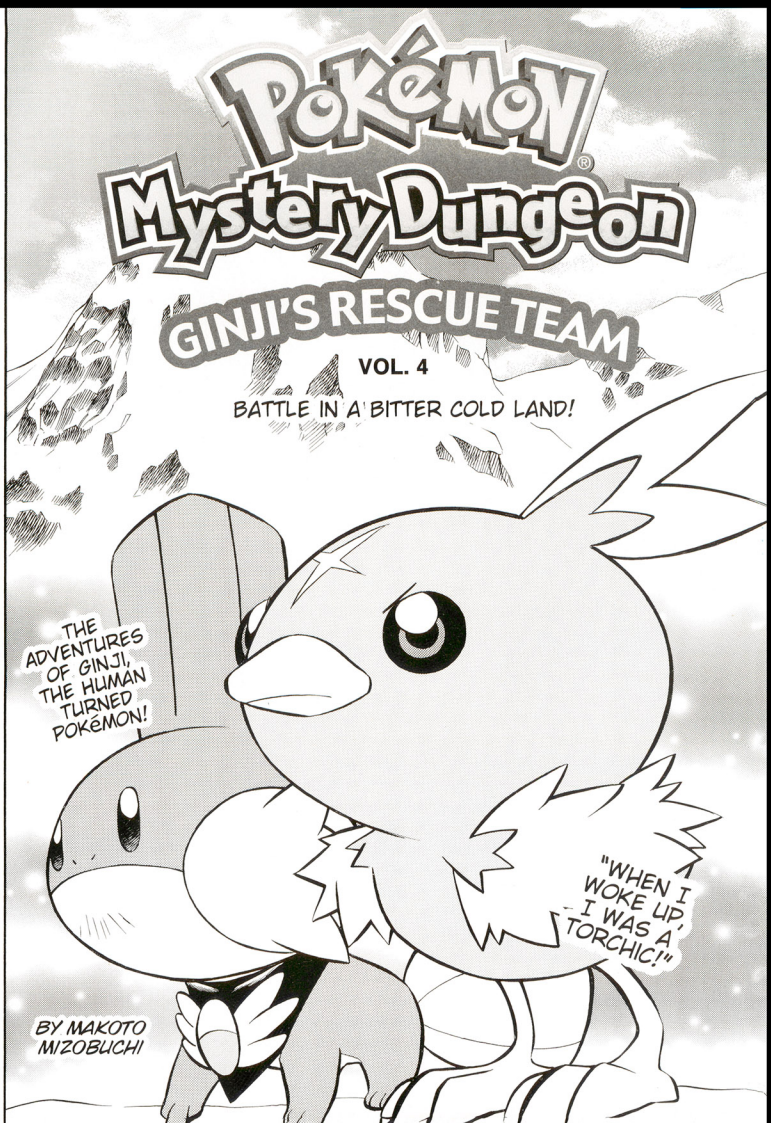
GRAND PRIZE

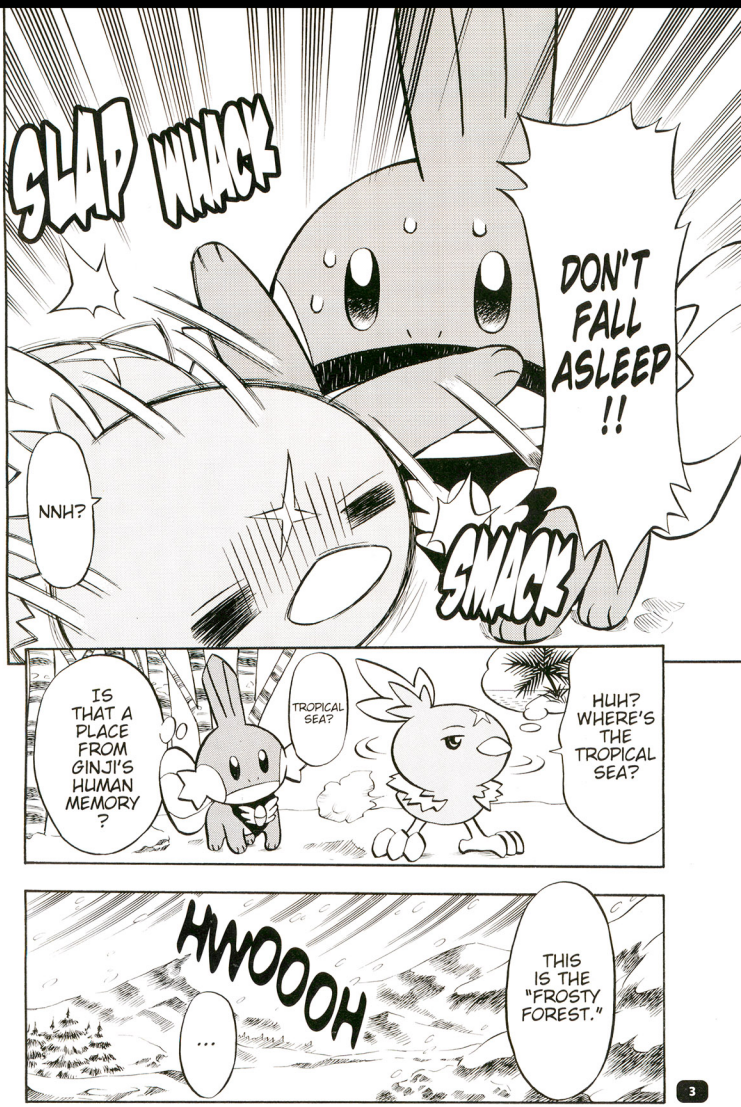
10 WINNERS!

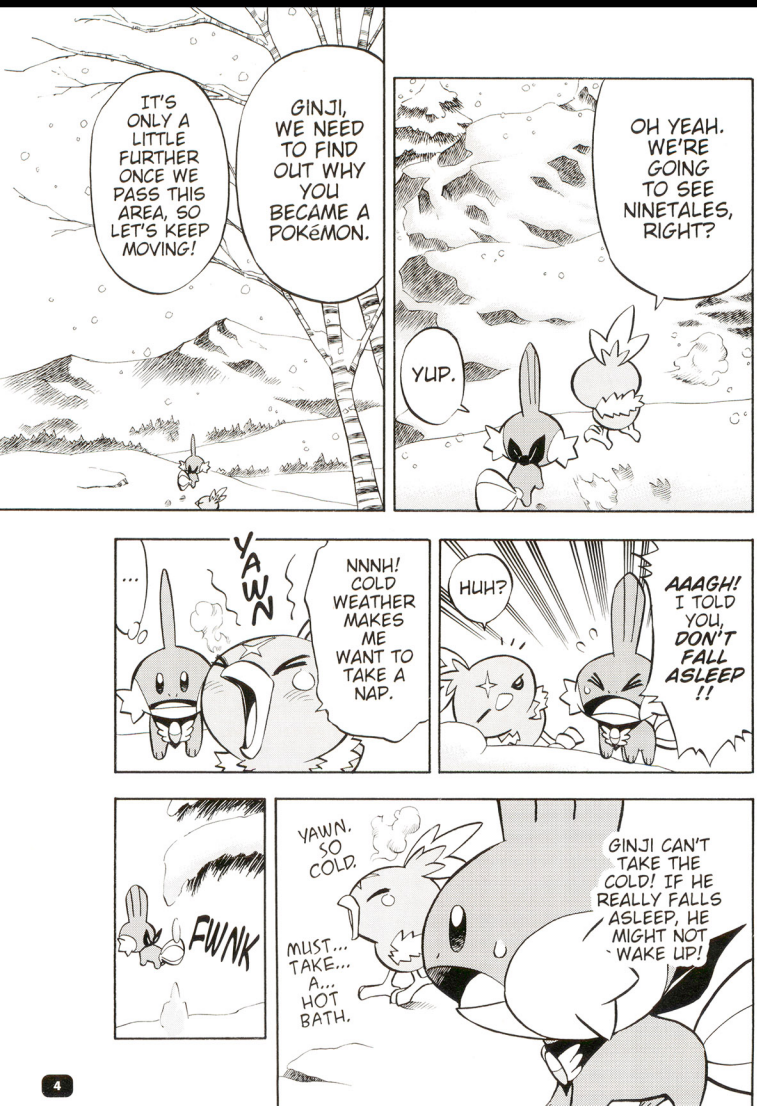
Amazing games. The revolutionary remote. Wii Channels.

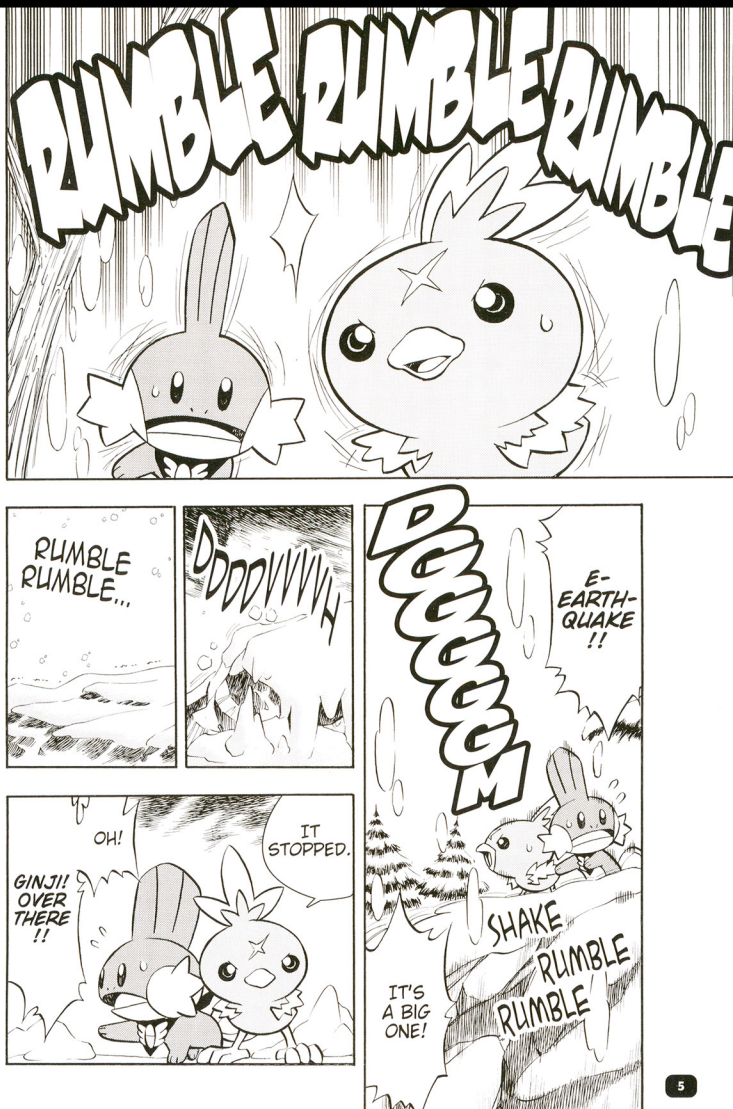
The Wii experience has something for everyone. Ten lucky winners will experience the thrill of Nintendo's revolutionary Wii console and perfect their golf, tennis, bowling, baseball and boxing techniques with Wii Sports.


Pokémon
Mystery Dungeon
GINJI'S RESCUE TEAM
VOL. 4
BATTLE IN A BITTER COLD LAND!
THE ADVENTURES OF GINJI, THE HUMAN TURNED POKÉMON!
"WHEN I WOKE UP, I WAS A TORCHIC!"
BY MAKOTO MIZOBUCHI

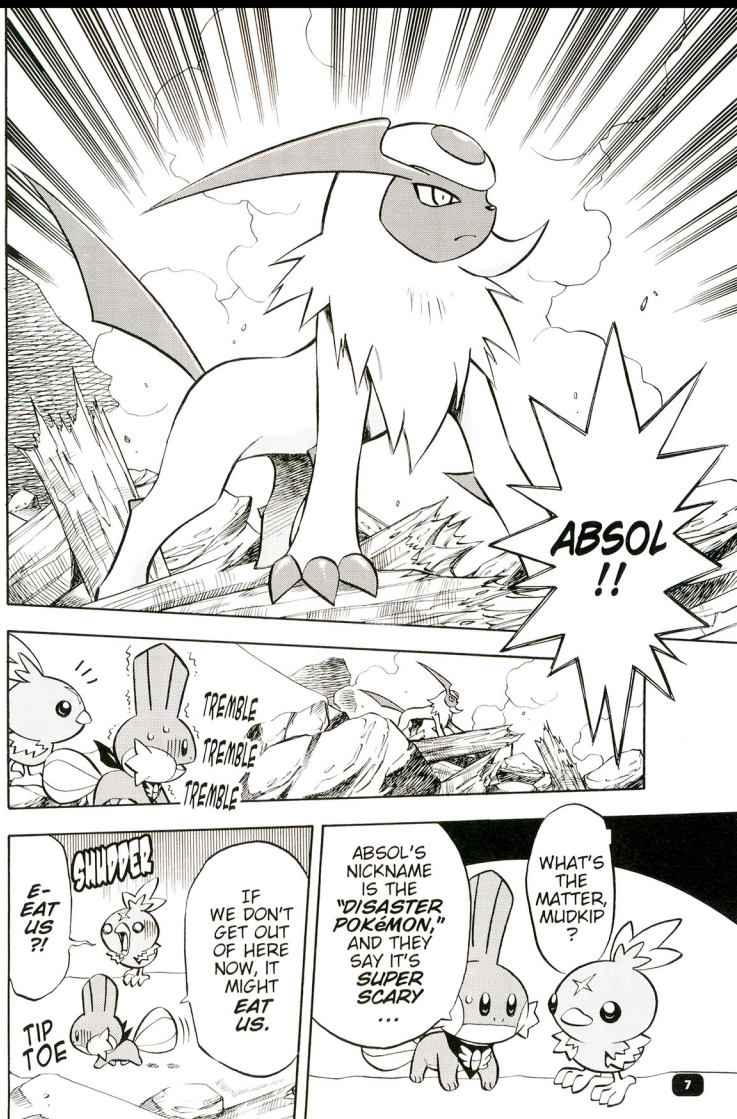
GLOW
THE SUN'S RAYS SHINING DOWN!! THIS IS PARADISE... RIGHT?
ZZZZSHAAAA
SLURP
GINJI!
SO WARM...
GLOW GLOW GLOW
CAN'T BEAT SUMMER.


SLAP
WHACK
DON'T FALL ASLEEP !!
NNH?
SMACK
HUH? WHERE'S THE TROPICAL SEA?
TROPICAL SEA?
IS THAT A PLACE FROM GINJI'S HUMAN MEMORY ?
THIS IS THE "FROSTY FOREST."
HWOOOH
...


GINJI, WE NEED TO FIND OUT WHY YOU BECAME A POKéMON.
IT'S ONLY A LITTLE FURTHER ONCE WE PASS THIS AREA, SO LET'S KEEP MOVING!
OH YEAH. WE'RE GOING TO SEE NINETALES, RIGHT?
YUP.
...
YAWN
NNNH! COLD WEATHER MAKES ME WANT TO TAKE A NAP.
HUH?
AAAGH! I TOLD YOU, DON'T FALL ASLEEP!!
FWNK
YAWN. SO COLD.
MUST... TAKE... A... HOT BATH.
GINJI CAN'T TAKE THE COLD! IF HE REALLY FALLS ASLEEP, HE MIGHT NOT WAKE UP!


RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE
DGGGGGM
E-EARTH-QUAKE!!
SHAKE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
IT'S A BIG ONE!
DDDDVVVVH
RUMBLE RUMBLE...
IT STOPPED.
OH!
GINJI! OVER THERE!!

DASH
LET'S CHECK IT OUT!
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
DOSH
THIS IS TERRIBLE ...
!


ABSOL!!
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
SHIVER
E-EAT US?!
TIP TOE
IF WE DON'T GET OUT OF HERE NOW, IT MIGHT EAT US.
ABSOL'S NICKNAME IS THE "DISASTER POKéMON," AND THEY SAY IT'S SUPER SCARY...
WHAT'S THE MATTER, MUDKIP?

PLAYER'S POLL SWEEPSTAKES

December 2006, Volume 210

FILL THIS OUT TO ENTER!

Name

Address

City State/Prov. Zip/Postal Code

( ) –

Telephone Number Membership Number
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A. How old are you?
1. Under 6 **2.** 6-9 **3.** 10-12
4. 13-16 **5.** 17-24 **6.** 25 or older

B. Sex
1. Male **2.** Female

C. Which statement most accurately describes your feelings about this month's Pokémon Mystery Dungeon comic book?
1. I liked everything about the comic book.
2. I liked the story, but I didn't like the reverse format.
3. I liked the manga style, but I didn't like the story.
4. I didn't like it at all.
5. I have no opinion.

D. Please rate the likelihood that you or someone in your household will purchase a Wii. Please choose one answer only.
1. Very likely
2. Somewhat likely
3. No feelings one way or the other
4. Not very likely
5. Not likely at all

E. Where do you spend the majority of your time playing video games?
1. Living room
2. Bedroom
3. Recreation room or basement
4. Media room or home theater
5. Dorm room
6. At someone else's house or apartment

F. How satisfied are you with this issue?
1. Very satisfied **2.** Somewhat satisfied
3. Somewhat dissatisfied **4.** Very dissatisfied

G. Do you plan to renew your subscription to Nintendo Power?
1. Yes **2.** No
3. Undecided **4.** I don't subscribe, but I plan to do so.
5. I don't subscribe, and I don't plan to do so.

H. Would you recommend Nintendo Power to others?
1. Yes **2.** No

Place
First Class
Stamp
Here

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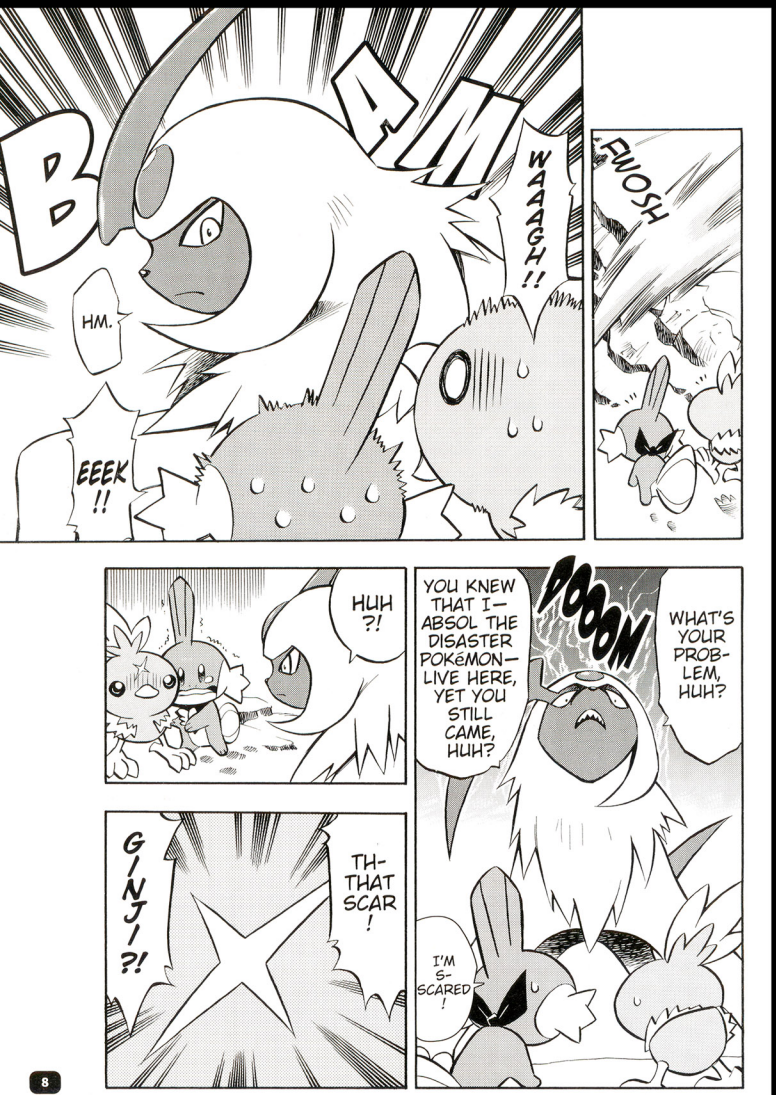
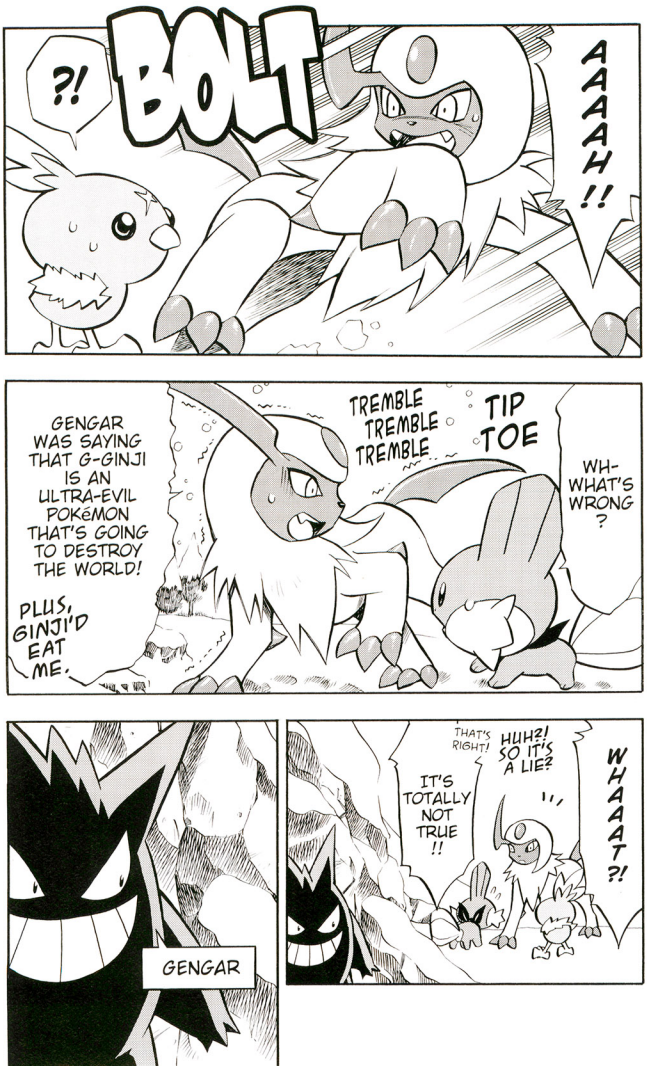
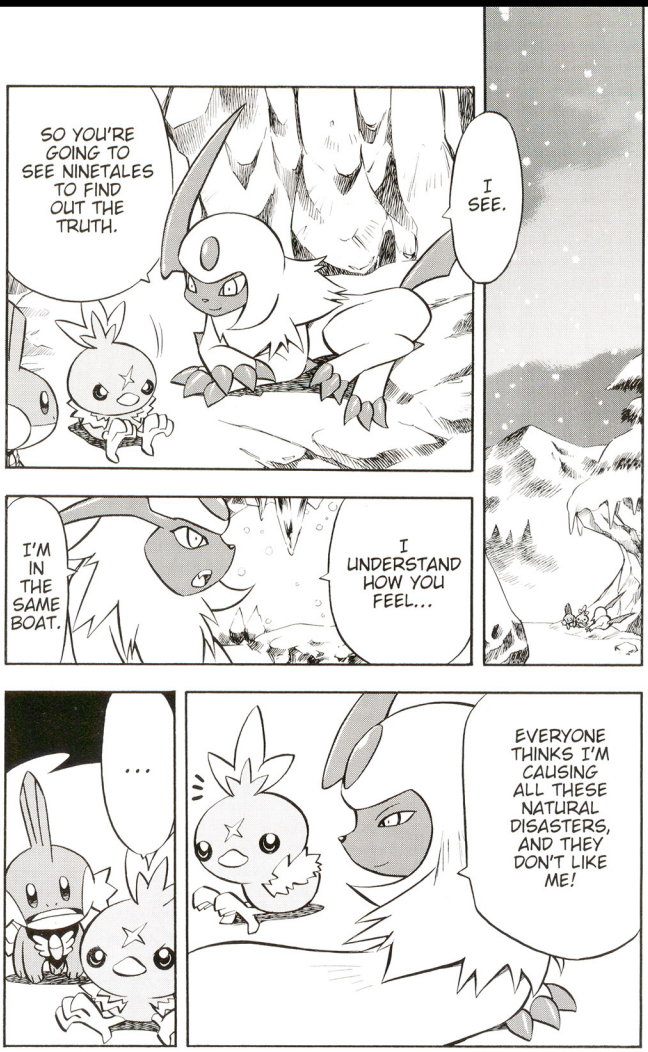
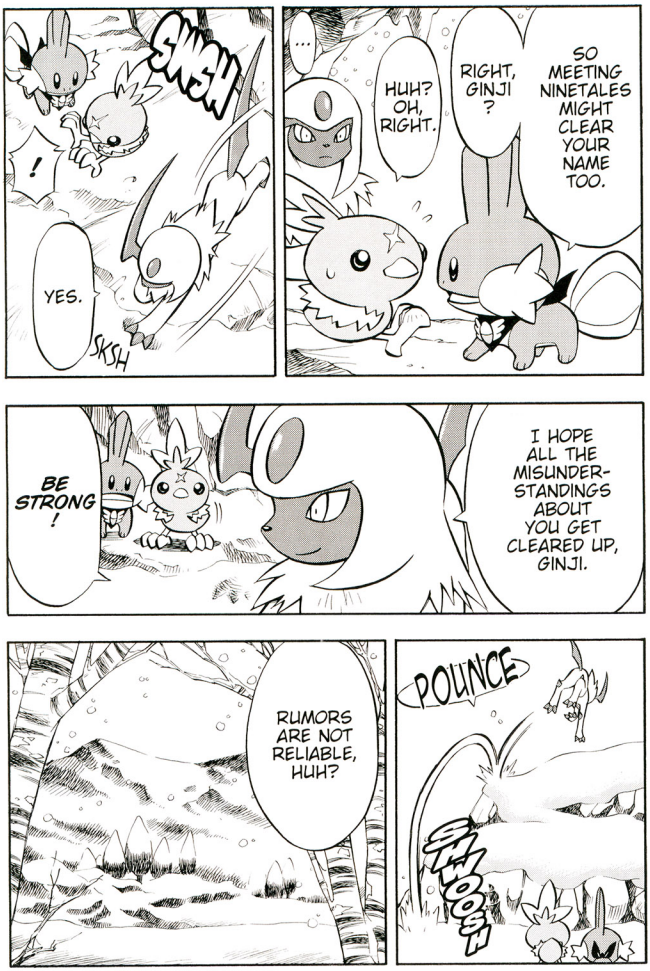
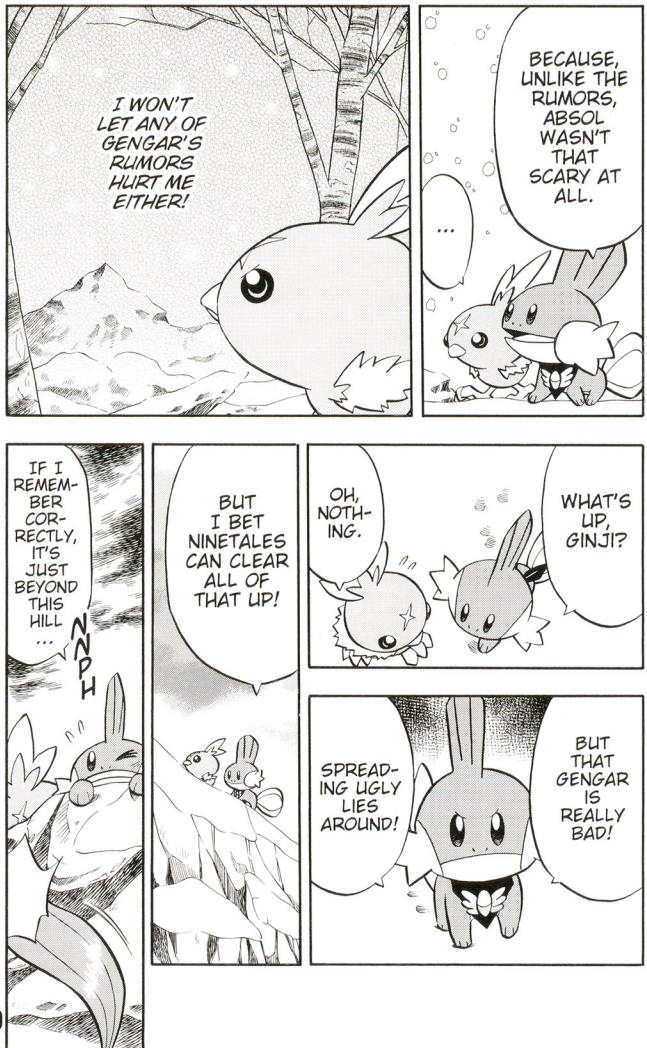

BAM
WAAAGH!!
HM.
EEEK!!
FWOSH
WHAT'S YOUR PROB-LEM, HUH?
BOOOM
YOU KNEW THAT I— ABSOL THE DISASTER POKéMON— LIVE HERE, YET YOU STILL CAME, HUH?
I'M S-SCARED!
HUH?!
TH-THAT SCAR!
GINJI?!

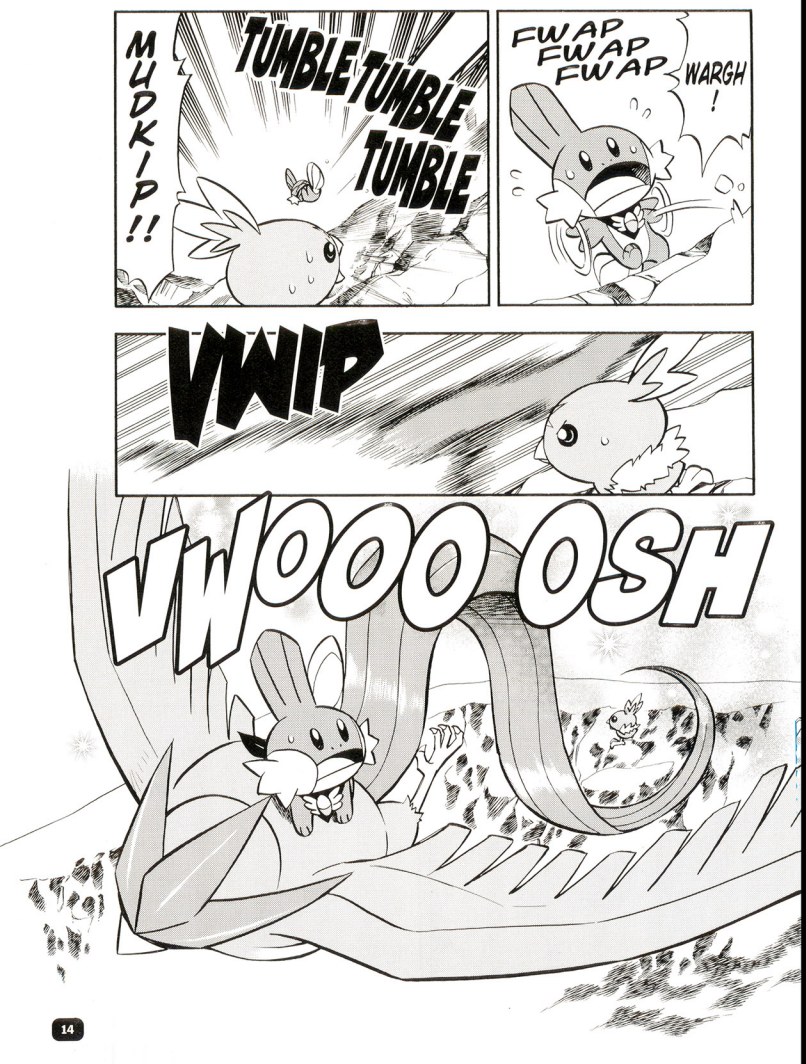

?!
BOLT
AAAAH!!
GENGAR WAS SAYING THAT G-GINJI IS AN ULTRA-EVIL POKéMON THAT'S GOING TO DESTROY THE WORLD!
PLUS, GINJI'D EAT ME.
TREMBLE TREMBLE TREMBLE
TIP TOE
WH-WHAT'S WRONG?
GENGAR
THAT'S RIGHT!
IT'S TOTALLY NOT TRUE !!
HUH?! SO IT'S A LIE?
WHAAAT?!

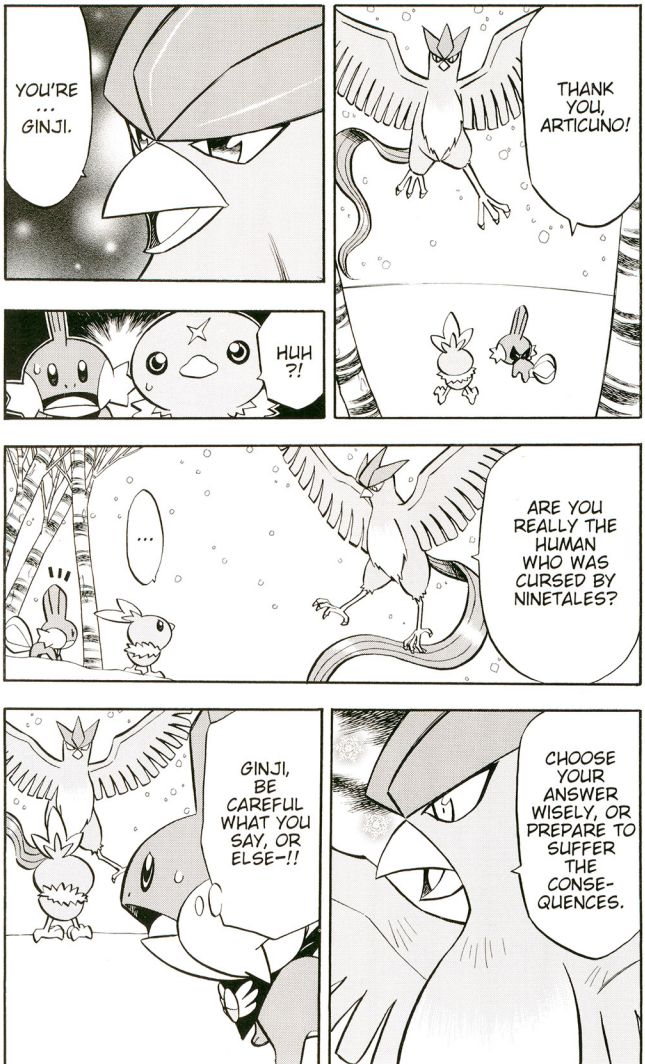

SO YOU'RE GOING TO SEE NINETALES TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH.
I SEE.
I'M IN THE SAME BOAT.
I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL...
...
EVERYONE THINKS I'M CAUSING ALL THESE NATURAL DISASTERS, AND THEY DON'T LIKE ME!

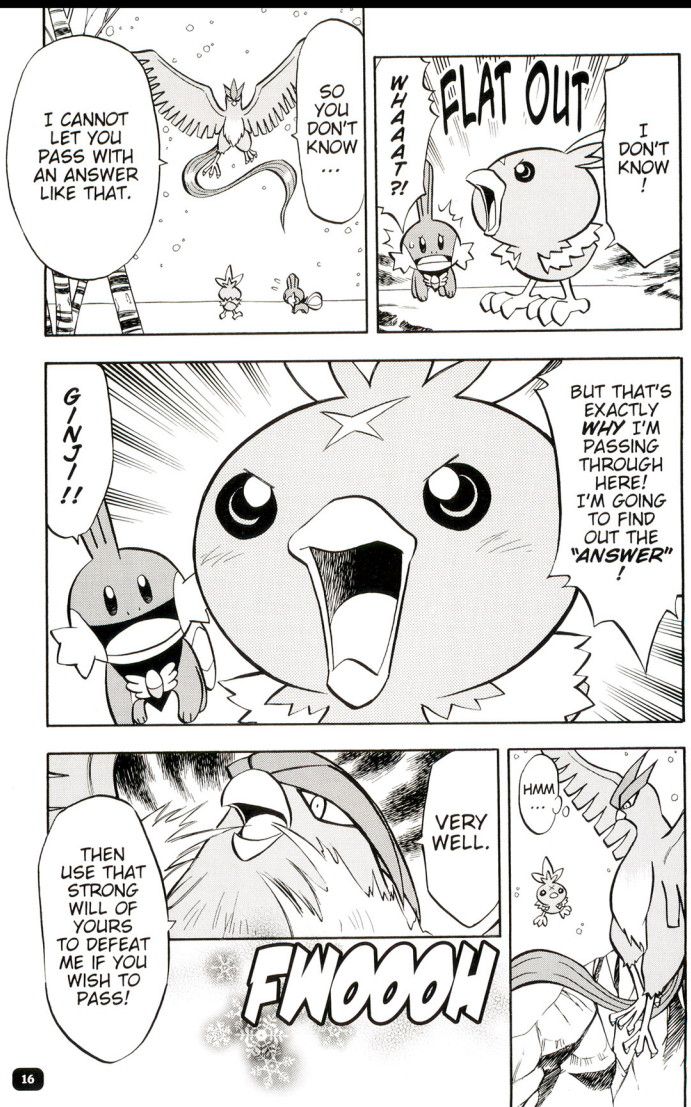

SMASH!
!
YES.
SKSH
...
HUH? OH, RIGHT.
RIGHT, GINJI?
SO MEETING NINETALES MIGHT CLEAR YOUR NAME TOO.
BE STRONG!
I HOPE ALL THE MISUNDER-STANDINGS ABOUT YOU GET CLEARED UP, GINJI.
RUMORS ARE NOT RELIABLE, HUH?
POUNCE
THUMP

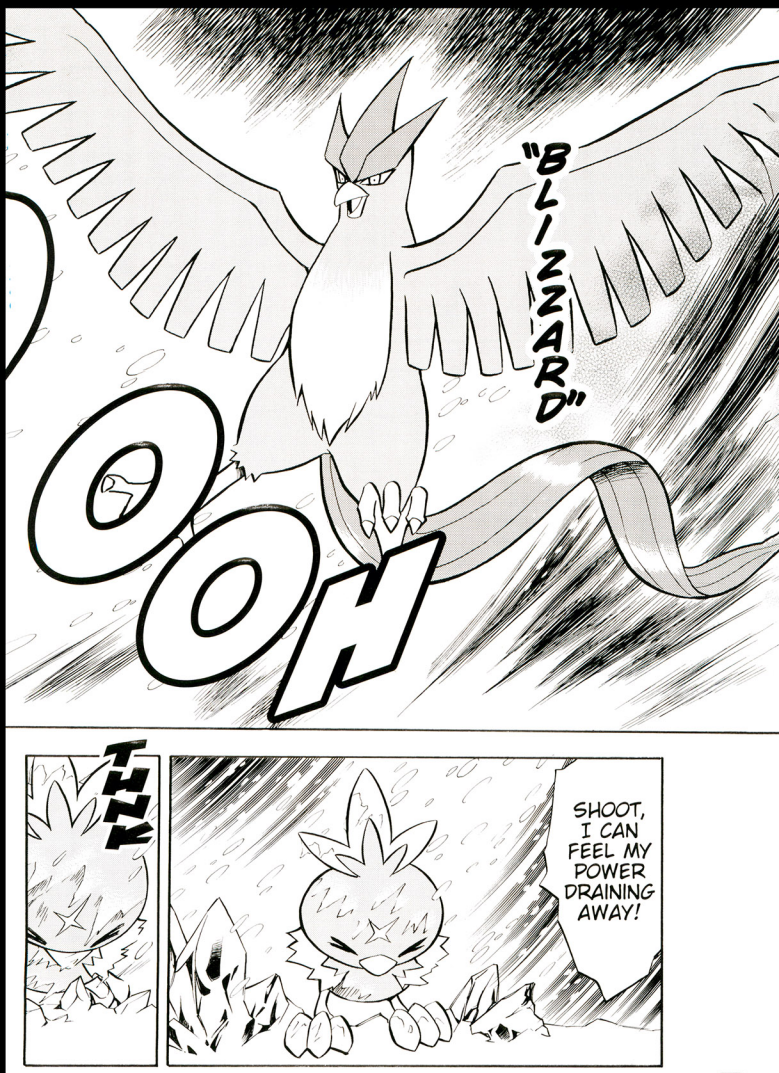

I WON'T LET ANY OF GENGAR'S RUMORS HURT ME EITHER!
BECAUSE, UNLIKE THE RUMORS, ABSOL WASN'T THAT SCARY AT ALL.
...
WHAT'S UP, GINJI?
OH, NOTHING.
BUT I BET NINETALES CAN CLEAR ALL OF THAT UP!
IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, IT'S JUST BEYOND THIS HILL ...
NNPH
BUT THAT GENGAR IS REALLY BAD!
SPREADING UGLY LIES AROUND!

DOOM


MUDKIP!!
TUMBLE TUMBLE TUMBLE
FWAP FWAP FWAP
WARGH!
VWIP
VWOOOOSH

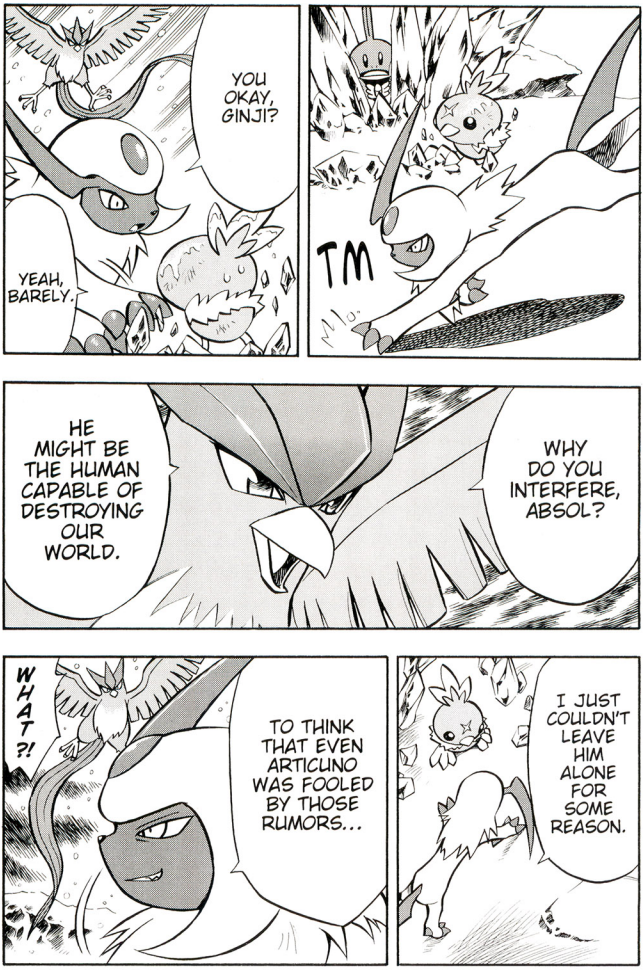

YOU'RE ... GINJI.
THANK YOU, ARTICUNO!
HUH ?!
...
ARE YOU REALLY THE HUMAN WHO WAS CURSED BY NINETALES?
GINJI, BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SAY, OR ELSE-!!
CHOOSE YOUR ANSWER WISELY, OR PREPARE TO SUFFER THE CONSE-QUENCES.

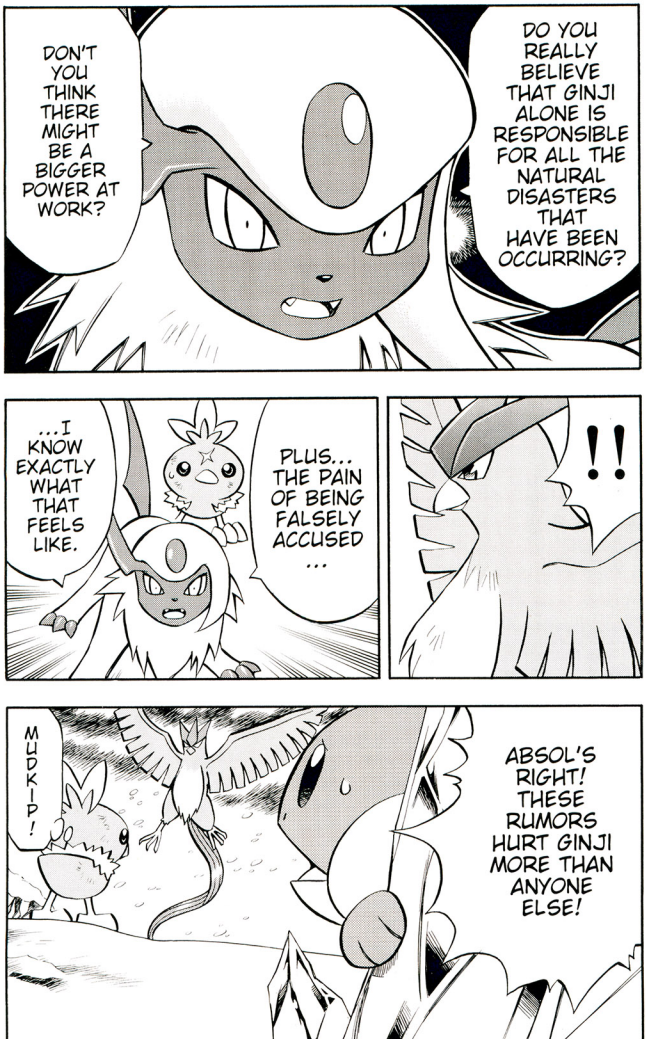

I CANNOT LET YOU PASS WITH AN ANSWER LIKE THAT.
SO YOU DON'T KNOW ...
WHAAAAT?!
FLAT OUT
I DON'T KNOW!
GINJI!!
BUT THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I'M PASSING THROUGH HERE! I'M GOING TO FIND OUT THE "ANSWER"!
THEN USE THAT STRONG WILL OF YOURS TO DEFEAT ME IF YOU WISH TO PASS!
VERY WELL.
FWOOOOH
HMM ...

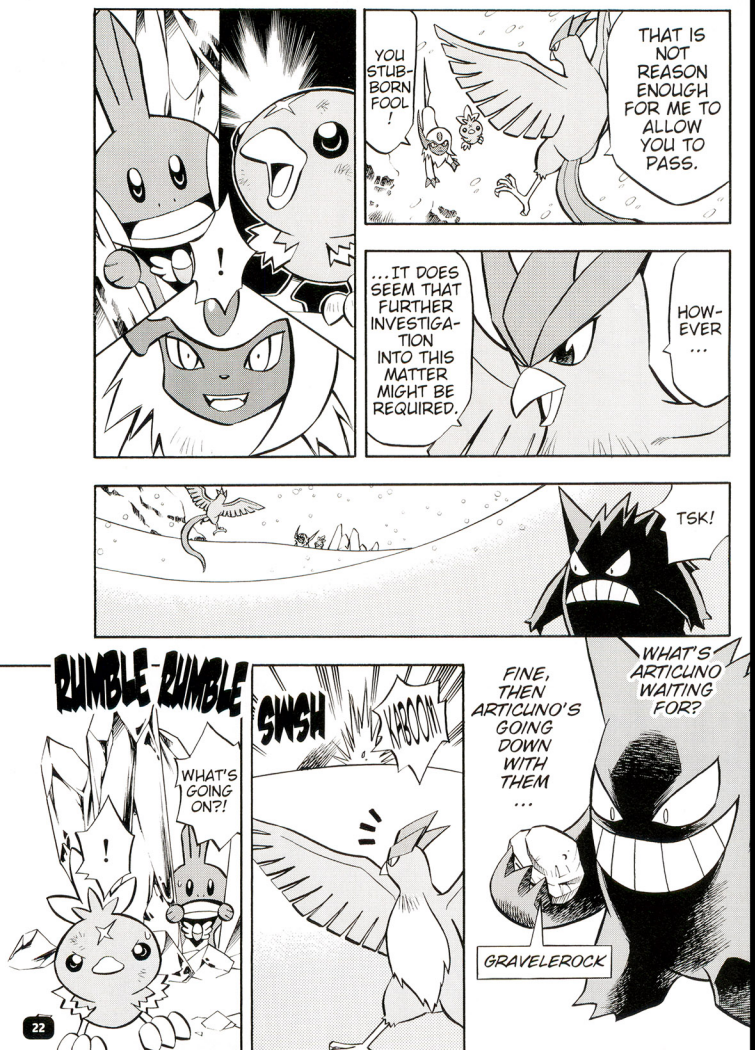

"BLIZZARD"
OOH
AHH
SHOOT, I CAN FEEL MY POWER DRAINING AWAY!

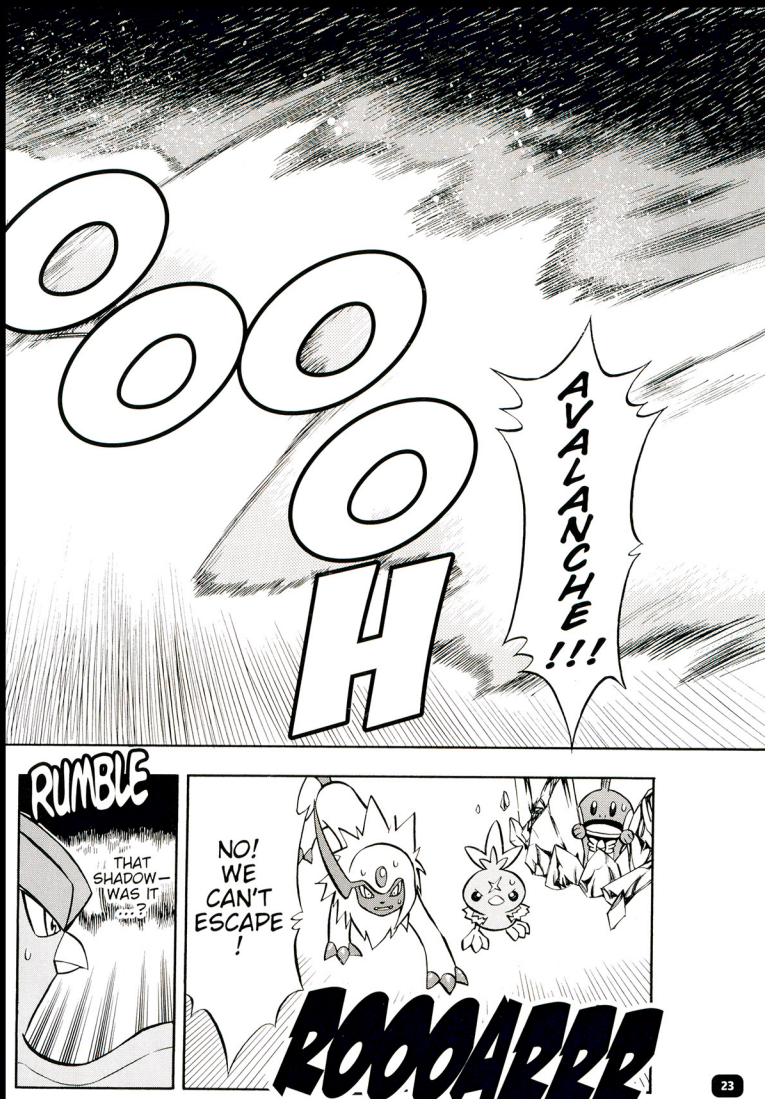
UWOO
PWK
PWK
PWK
PWK
GINJI!!
N-NO! GINJI CAN'T TAKE THE COLD!!

!!
B
ZAP
BRAM
ABSOL!


YOU OKAY, GINJI?
YEAH, BARELY.
TM
WHY DO YOU INTERFERE, ABSOL?
HE MIGHT BE THE HUMAN CAPABLE OF DESTROYING OUR WORLD.
I JUST COULDN'T LEAVE HIM ALONE FOR SOME REASON.
TO THINK THAT EVEN ARTICUNO WAS FOOLED BY THOSE RUMORS...
WHAT?!

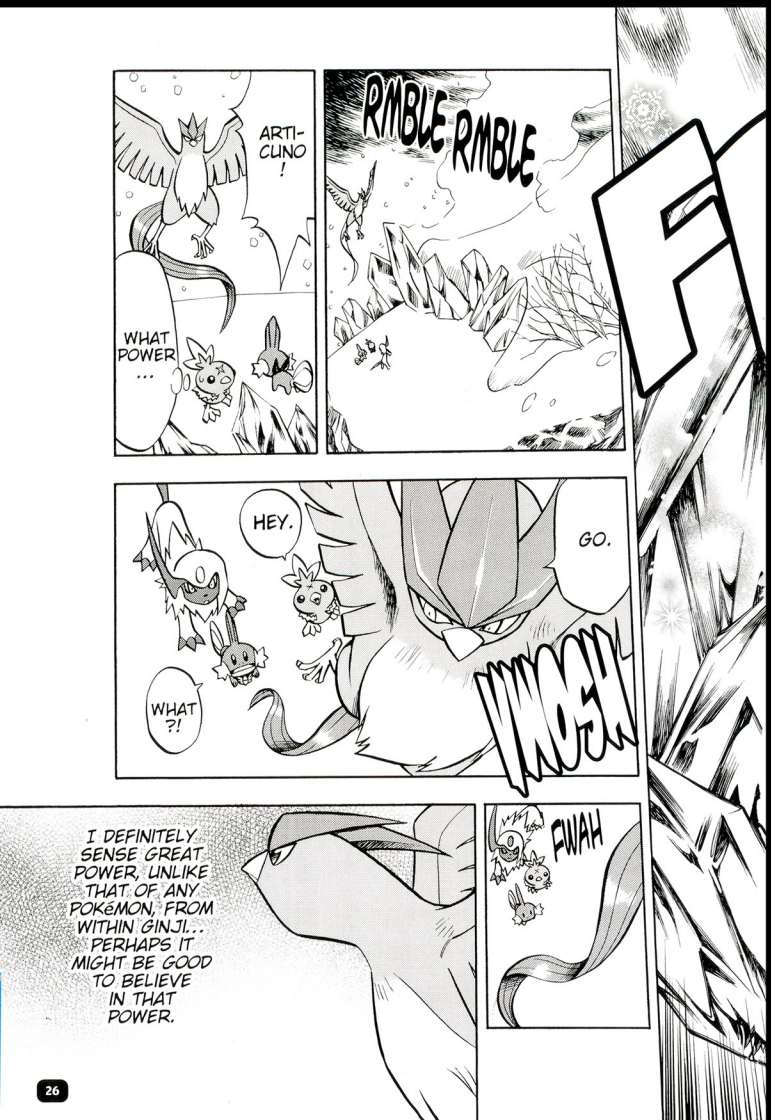

DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT GINJI ALONE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THE NATURAL DISASTERS THAT HAVE BEEN OCCURRING?
DON'T YOU THINK THERE MIGHT BE A BIGGER POWER AT WORK?
!!
PLUS... THE PAIN OF BEING FALSELY ACCUSED ...
...I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THAT FEELS LIKE.
ABSOL'S RIGHT! THESE RUMORS HURT GINJI MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE!
MUDKIP!

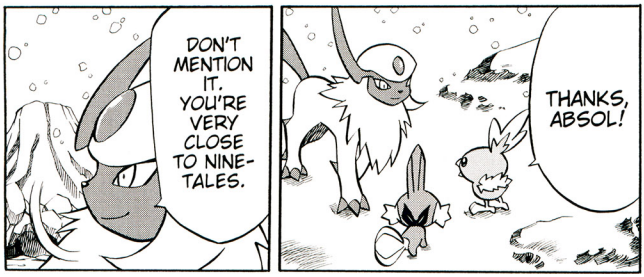

THAT IS NOT REASON ENOUGH FOR ME TO ALLOW YOU TO PASS.
YOU STUB-BORN FOOL!
HOW-EVER ...
...IT DOES SEEM THAT FURTHER INVESTIGA-TION INTO THIS MATTER MIGHT BE REQUIRED.
TSK!
WHAT'S ARTICUNO WAITING FOR?
FINE, THEN ARTICUNO'S GOING DOWN WITH THEM ...
GRAVELEROCK
RUMBLE-RUMBLE
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
SWSH
WOOSH

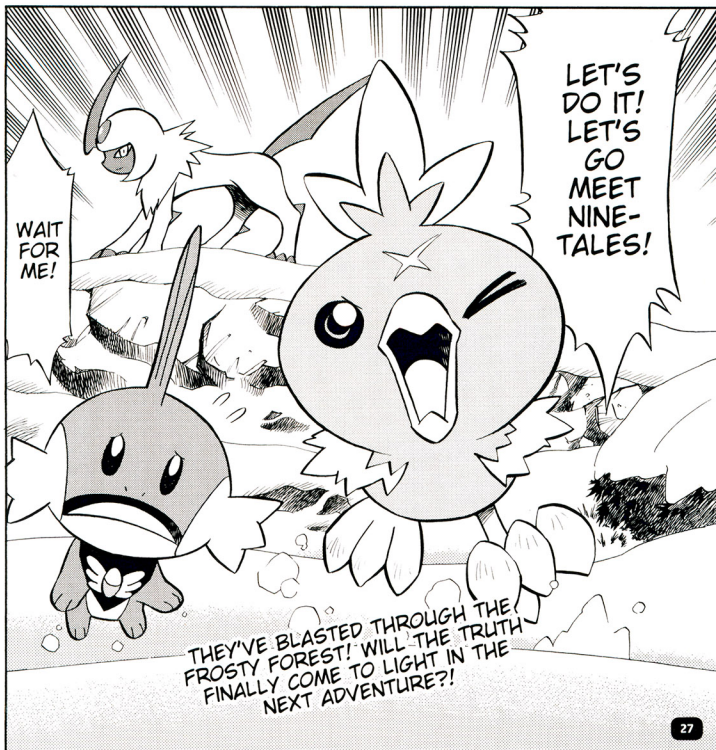

OOOH
AVALANCHE!!!
RUMBLE
THAT SHADOW— WAS IT ...?
NO! WE CAN'T ESCAPE!
ROOOARRR

D WO
VS
H

"SHEER COLD"!


ARTI-CUNO!
WHAT POWER...
RMBLE RMBLE
HEY.
GO.
WHAT?!
WHOOSH
FWAH
I DEFINITELY SENSE GREAT POWER, UNLIKE THAT OF ANY POKéMON, FROM WITHIN GINJI... PERHAPS IT MIGHT BE GOOD TO BELIEVE IN THAT POWER.


DON'T MENTION IT. YOU'RE VERY CLOSE TO NINE-TALES.
THANKS, ABSOL!


LET'S DO IT! LET'S GO MEET NINE-TALES!
WAIT FOR ME!
THEY'VE BLASTED THROUGH THE FROSTY FOREST! WILL THE TRUTH FINALLY COME TO LIGHT IN THE NEXT ADVENTURE?!

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POKéMON MYSTERY DUNGEON
COMIC SERIES CONTINUES
WITH ANOTHER
ACTION-PACKED
EPISODE!

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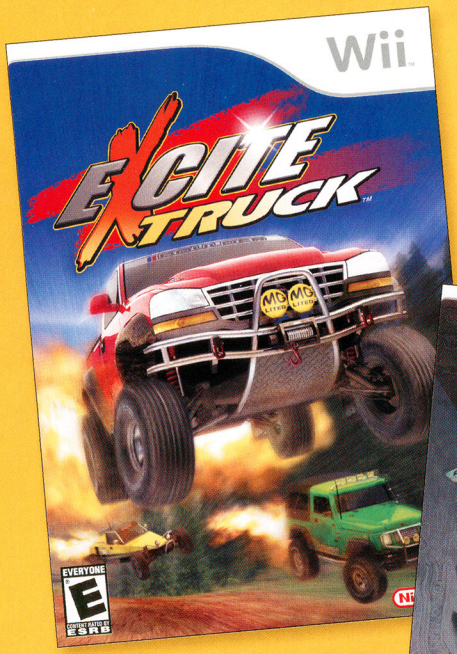
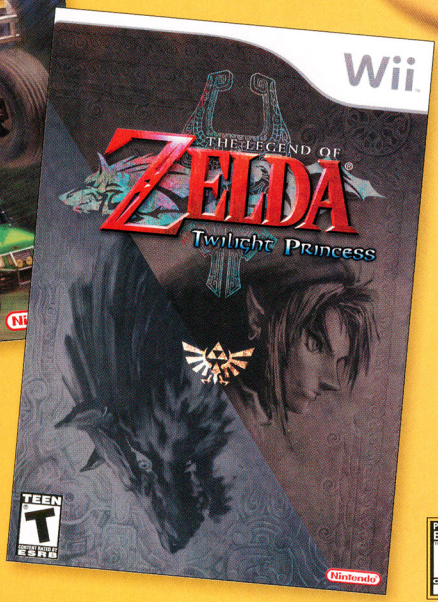
NINTENDO POWER

PLAYER'S POLL SWEEPSTAKES

December 2006





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Ready to ROCK

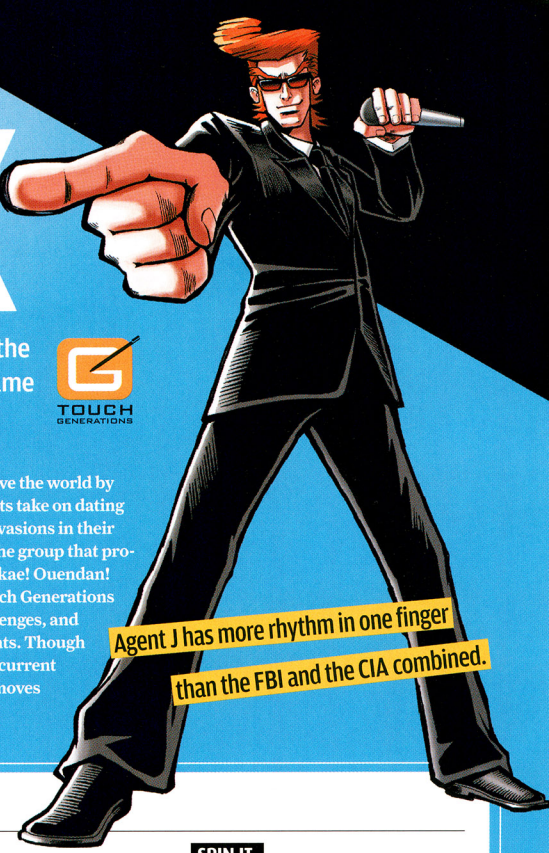
Nintendo's Elite Beat Agents is poised for the spotlight. Find out why the DS rhythm game could be the next big thing.

By George Sinfield

TOUCH GENERATIONS

Impeccable suits, to-die-for hair, and a mission to save the world by dancing in the face of disaster—the Elite Beat Agents take on dating mishaps, lost dogs, bottleneck traffic, and alien invasions in their tap-to-the-music DS debut. Developed by iNiS, the group that produced Japanese-import phenomenon Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan! (translation: Go! Fight! Cheer Squad!), the Touch Generations title has infectious rhythm, story-driven challenges, and versus or co-op play for up to four participants. Though the basics are simple, the beat combos in 19 current and classic hits will have you discovering moves that you didn't know you had. Suit up!

EVERYONE 10+ T E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



Agent J has more rhythm in one finger than the FBI and the CIA combined.

Putting on the Moves

HIT IT

A circle closes in on every Hit marker. To stay on the beat, tap the marker at the moment that the circle is the same size as the marker.

DRAG IT

Phrase markers are lines and curves. Touch the number at one end, then move along the marker as the ball rolls.

SPIN IT

You can activate a Spin marker by swiveling your stylus in a circular pattern. The faster you go, the faster the meter behind it will fill up.

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Rock 'n' Roll Tour

The world is your dance floor. In the single-player game, scenarios pop up on a globe that you can drag to rotate. Every scenario features a different song and beat program. Your mission is to hit, drag, and spin markers to the music. As a song progresses, the Elite Beat Agents show their moves on the bottom screen while the story unfolds in comic-book style on the top screen. If you hit the markers on the beats, your score will increase and the Elite-o-Meter will fill up. During breaks (often instrumental solos), the story changes. If the Elite-o-Meter is above the red zone, the plot turn is for the better. If it's not, the turn is for the worse. In the scenario titled "Hey, Taxi! To the Hospital, and Hurry!!," for example, road-raging cabbie Jack attempts to drive a pregnant woman to the hospital to the tune of "Sk8er Boi" (covered here, but originally performed by Avril Lavigne). In one section, the cab's emergence from a subway station results in a daredevil flight over the street. If the meter is low, the cab crashes to the pavement, grill first. If the meter's above the breaking point, the cab lands gracefully on four wheels. Song completion with the Elite-o-Meter above empty results in a happy ending.

The game progresses with every successful song completion. Often, two or three scenarios pop up at once. After you've cleared all of them, another group presents itself. In one of the game's dramatic moments, all roads lead to a scenario titled "The Christmas Gift," in which seven-year-old Lucy wishes for the safe return of her father to the tune of "You're the Inspiration" (originally performed by Chicago). Your stylus taps to the rhythm of Christmas bells and slides to a gently drum-rolling crescendo. Though the song is on the corny side, the story and its integration of the Hit and Phrase markers are clever and heartfelt. Lucy returns later to rally all of the game's characters when the agents themselves need help.

Running through the song succession is just one part of the game. High scores allow you to earn advanced letter grades for every scenario, rise through the ranks of agents, and unlock bonus songs. You can achieve a high score by hitting markers perfectly on the beat and by stringing together hit combinations.

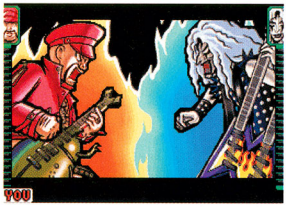
The game's four difficulty levels offer different versions of each song's beat patterns, and in the advanced levels the size of some of the markers shrinks. The cast of characters changes with each jump in difficulty, too. In the Breezin' levels, Agent Spin leads the crew. In the more-challenging Cruizin' levels, Agent J takes the role of lead Elite Beater. The agents are replaced by a new group—the Elite Beat Divas—at the top difficulty setting.

The advanced levels, song stories, and a big finish make Elite Beat Agents a diamond in the rhythm-gaming rough.

More Agents, More Fun

As great as it is as a single-player game, Elite Beat Agents shines even brighter when multiple players get in on the act. The VS Player mode allows up to four players to go up against each other on two teams. Everyone blasts through the same beat program and the performances of each team's players are compared. In the game world, two teams compete in a winner-takes-all event. For "Walkie Talkie Man" (originally performed by Steriogram), for example, the event is the Axemaster Olympics, with guitar players comparing licks. During the event, the guitarist who is dominating (thanks to the higher point totals of the team backing him) grabs more of the spotlight and crowds out the other player. For a cover of the Madonna classic "Material Girl" the competition is Universal Idol, a war between two singing divas. There are five types of events in all. DS Download play (requiring a DS for every player, but just one game card), is limited to a handful of songs. If every participant has a game card, players can select from any song that the host had unlocked.

Co-op play requires a game card for every player. Participants take turns performing parts of the song



You can team up or compete with a party of four in Elite Beat Agents. Versus matches offer new competition scenarios. Co-op matches run through the stories of the single-player game, with players taking turns at hitting the right notes.

MORE DS DELIGHTS

And the Hits Keep Coming

Elite Beat Agents isn't the only DS game ready to make waves. While the new installments of established franchises—Final Fantasy III, Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin, and The Sims 2 Pets—will likely flourish, a few relative unknowns also stand a chance of attracting large audiences. Atlus's Touch Detective (reviewed this issue) is among them. A striking, anime-inspired art style and a rich story with clever dialogue make the stylus-driven adventure one worth investigating. Speaking of investigations, ace attorney Phoenix Wright is about to open up another case in Capcom's Justice For All (see the preview on page 36). Hotel Dusk: Room 215, to be published by Nintendo in early 2007, comes to us from Cing, the group that developed Trace Memory. The moody mystery has you tilting your DS 90 degrees and holding it as you would a notebook. Konami's Lost in Blue 2 also looks to innovate with new desert-island survival activities.

Touch Detective

Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney
Justice for All

as the story unfolds. At times, all players have to hit the same beats. Success is determined by the accumulative performance of the team.

Players can also pass Ghost data along to each other, allowing one player to go up against the other's best performances. Those who own the game can share with those who don't, too, by transmitting a tutorial and the first scenario, which follows the travails of a babysitter and her boyfriend to the tune of "Walkie Talkie Man."

The Elite Beat Agents never go it alone, and you don't have to play solo, either.

Get into the Groove

Despite its popularity, the rhythm-game genre is relatively untapped, especially on handhelds. The touch sensitivity of the DS makes it a perfect platform for such a game, and Elite Beat Agents takes every opportunity to make it count. The songs (all performed by cover bands) span the decades, from "Jumpin' Jack Flash" (performed by the Rolling Stones originally) and "ABC" (a Jackson 5 song) to "The Anthem" (originally Good Charlotte) and "Makes No Difference" (a Sum 41 hit). The agents pull off great moves with style, and the stories for every song show a kooky sense of humor. You may even want to perform poorly to see what becomes of the characters. Add to that a layout of beats that really makes your stylus move, especially at advanced difficulty levels. The groove is there and the agents are at your service.

With your help, a pair of material girls will tame the wild beasts.

BIRTH OF A BEAT

Agent Origins

The prospect of attracting a large North American audience to a game about a Japanese cheer squad who save the day to the tune of J-Pop hits didn't seem very promising to Ouendan! designer **Keiichi Yano**. So, he and his iNiS team created a new game from scratch. We asked Yano about the development of Elite Beat Agents.

NP: How do you describe Elite Beat Agents?
KY: EBA is a game in which you help people that are in need of a little energy; that extra boost that can help them overcome the hardships that they are facing. The game features a threesome of agents from a secret government agency that is headed by their leader, Commander Kahn. He looks for targets that are in distress and will dispatch the agents to anywhere around the globe. From there, the song and dance performance of the agents will mesmerize the target and boost their energy, thus enabling them to succeed in overcoming the problems that lie ahead of them.

NP: What does Elite Beat Agents bring to the rhythm-game genre?
KY: Since EBA is exclusive to the Nintendo DS, we can take advantage of the special hardware in many different ways. The two biggest advantages that we had were the stylus and the dual screens. The stylus enables a very direct play style that you can't get with a gamepad-type controller. Have stylus, hit screen with stylus . . . very simple. The dual screens are also great because we can separate the gaming action with the unfolding story and have it not get in the way of each other. EBA also has great motivating stories that work in concert with the songs to create an experience that can only be had through a rhythm-action game.

NP: The characters in Ouendan! are members of a cheer squad. How did the transition to special agents take place?
KY: For very obvious reasons, male cheerleading is not something that a western audience can relate to. In Japan, the Ouendan are very real, nonfictional characters that are the cheerleaders for your baseball and football games. We needed characters that people could easily relate to, so I knew from the start that I wanted a taskforce of sorts since the premise of the game is that these guys basically go out and help the troubled.

The idea that we had was that a secret government agency could just come out of nowhere and save the day through song and dance. After that we came up with the Commander Kahn character and that basically set us in the direction we wanted to go. Special agents seemed to be a natural choice since they are usually covert and always have some special task they need to fulfill. Also, everybody can relate to government agents (of course, not ones that sing and dance, but . . .)!

NP: What qualities did you look for in the music to be included in the game?
KY: If you've ever been to a college frat party with a live band, that is the feeling we want to convey: high-energy, no-nonsense, beat-thumping songs that you can just jump up and down to. At the same time, we also look for a lot of variety in the song selections, be it classic hits or the latest top-40 thing. And in the end, it's superimportant that the songs work well with the scenarios so that they complement each other.

NP: How do you go about developing a story for a song?
KY: We usually start by creating the stories for each stage, creating the whole tone of the game, and balancing the whole thing out from start to finish. We think about the type of characters that would be interesting to save, as well as the hilarious situations that they may be in. We will then start to develop those ideas and turn them into full storyboards.

Also, some stages are inspired by the song selections we make, which happen pretty much simultaneously. Music will always tell some kind of story and we will be inspired by those songs to create scenarios for them.

NP: What's the biggest challenge of creating humorous characters and stories for a North American audience?
KY: Obviously there are cultural differences in terms of the baseline story settings, but I find that if a situation is funny, that is an international thing. We also try to bring the manga feel into the game while still having it be accessible to a Western audience. Ultimately, we have to keep the character of the game intact so the personality is still there.

NP: What is your philosophy behind game difficulty for Elite Beat Agents?
KY: In the rhythm game genre, seasoned players expect a certain difficulty level on the higher levels. It's important that we provide those players with the challenge they need, but at the same time, giving all players a chance to feel like they can be rock stars too. Because in the end, everybody just wants to be a hero!

"It's got solid graphics, but most importantly,
it has gameplay that's interesting and unique."
– IGN

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NINTENDO POWER
OFFICIAL MINIGUIDE

MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

As you embark on Magical Starsign's interplanetary journey, our handy battle guide will ensure that you make it home in one piece.

By Steve Thomason

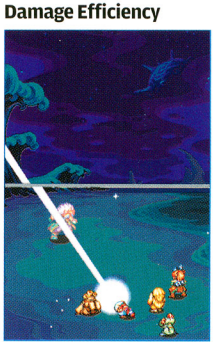
ASSUME THE POSITION

The first element of battle to consider is positioning. Each of your party members can be positioned in either the front or back row (up to a maximum of four per row). Characters in the front can use physical attacks, but their spells focus on only a single target. They're also more susceptible to enemy attack, and opponents' strikes will hit them for greater damage. From the back row, characters can't use physical attacks, but their magic affects multiple targets. An offensive spell might damage all of your enemies, for instance, and a healing spell can rejuvenate your entire party. The spell's effects are divided by the number of targets, however. For example, a spell that would have hit a single enemy for 200 points of damage from the front row will do approximately 50 points of damage from the back to each of four foes.

Battle Planning

Though you can change a party member's position during battle, doing so eats up the character's turn. Try to optimize your formation beforehand via the Magical Navigator (aka the pause menu). You'll still need to make some adjustments on the fly, but certain formations are generally more effective in a given area.

Damage Efficiency

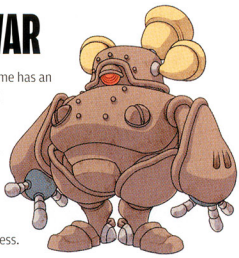


If you encounter small groups of powerful foes, move your characters that have the strongest magical attacks to the front row so you can focus on taking down one enemy at a time. For large groups of relatively weak enemies, front-row spells might be overkill, so keep party members in the back and spread out the damage for maximum efficiency.

A Strong Front

In general, it's best to keep characters with strong defense and good physical attack power in the front. Particularly weak or under-leveled characters should usually stay in the back, where they're less vulnerable. As your party grows, it becomes increasingly useful to have your best healer (probably Lassi) in the back so she can keep the entire party healthy.

ELEMENTS OF WAR



Every character and enemy in the game has an elemental affinity. Each affinity has an opposing element that it's especially strong against and one that it's especially weak against. A water spell does massive damage to a character with fire affinity, for example, but is fairly ineffective against a character with earth affinity. Taking full advantage of this elemental system is crucial to success.

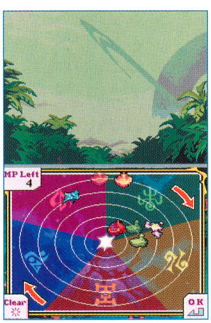
Elemental Priorities

When you target an enemy, a symbol representing the creature's affinity will appear. Use that information to formulate your battle plan. The party member whose affinity is particularly weak against the enemy's, for instance, might serve best as a healer or a support character for that battle.

Each element is affiliated with a planet. When a planet passes into an aura of the same color on the Astrolog, the corresponding element becomes stronger (and the members of that affinity start to glow). Enemies powered up in such a manner should be your first priority during battle.

Moving the Planets

On Puffoon (see sidebar), you'll earn a Sky Book that allows any of your characters to learn a non-elemental spell called Celestial Swap. With this spell, you can move a planet on the Astrolog clockwise during battle. You'll have access to other non-elemental spells over the course of your adventure, but each character can learn only one, and Celestial Swap is by far the most useful. Teach it to at least half your party (preferably the non-healers) so you can position the planets to your benefit during particularly tough battles. Those elemental boosts can make all the difference.

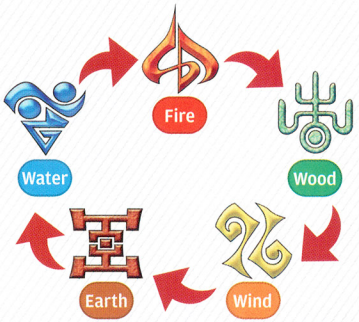


Day and Night

At the beginning of the game, you'll choose a light or dark affinity for your main character. Both affinities are "off the grid," so to speak. They're strong against each other, with no relation to any of the other elements nor the Astrolog. They receive a boost depending on whether it's day (light) or night (dark). When staying at an inn, choose to wake up at whichever time benefits your character.

ELEMENTAL CHART

The chart here illustrates the elemental order for quick reference. The direction of each arrow indicates strength over that sign.



TRAVEL PLANS

Your search for Miss Madeleine will span the entire Baklava solar system. The vast majority of the adventure is pretty linear, but you will have the option to choose which planet to visit next at certain points. Below is our recommended order of progression.

HELLO, NEUMANN

During your visit to Cassia, you'll "procure" a new space craft, the magical rocket *Neumann*. With this fancy new vessel, you can travel to any planet but Razen. We recommend heading to Puffoon next. The labyrinthine jungles of Gren are considerably more challenging, so it's better to go there once your characters are at a higher level.

TOO HOT TO HANDLE

Before you can journey to the fiery planet of Razen, you'll need to upgrade your ship with Aquarino. The rare element is found only on Cassia, so you'll need to head back there to find it.

CLASS REUNION

On Razen, you'll reunite with your final classmate, Sorbet, giving your party a full complement of elemental affinities. At this point, it becomes increasingly important to utilize those affinities to their maximum advantage. It may seem like you're nearing the end of your journey, but many more challenges await.

ODDS AND ENDS

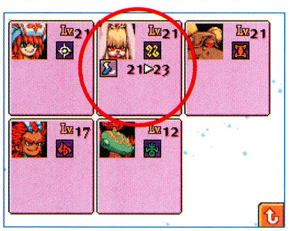
Now that you understand positioning and elemental affinities, here are a few additional tips to help you survive. Oh, and save frequently. The game has a nasty habit of suddenly throwing you into boss battles without warning.

Boost Timing

When casting a spell during battle, you can increase its potency by tapping the caster at just the right moment. Your stylus should touch the character at the exact same time as the elemental symbols closing in on him; you'll see a flash of light to verify that you've timed it correctly. (The more advanced the spell, the more precise your timing must be.) You can also give a character a defensive boost by tapping the party member just as he's about to be struck. If you're successful, the character will flash green and the enemy's attack will do less damage.

Need for Speed

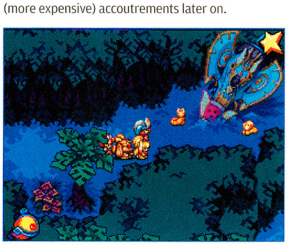
The order in which combatants take their turns is determined primarily by their speed ratings. That means if certain members of your party are too slow, the enemy will get to act first. When equipping items, increasing your speed should be a priority, even if it costs you a couple of points in another category.



It's especially important to boost the speed of your healers. Otherwise, if you're up against a quick group of foes, the enemy might wipe out members of your party before you've even had a chance to heal.

Free Eats

When you come across frogs and worms in the wild, take the time to collect them so you can save your money for equipment. It may seem unneccessary early in the game, but you'll need to pinch those pennies to afford some of the better (more expensive) accoutrements later on.



Leaving an area will cause the frogs and worms there to reappear next time you visit, essentially giving you a limitless supply of the stat-replenishing critters.

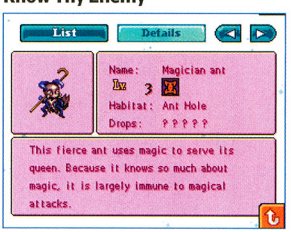
HATCHING SOME HELP

Magical Starsign's Tag mode allows you to connect to other players (referred to as Amigos) via local wireless communication. When connecting with an Amigo for the first time, you'll often receive a special item. One such item that you can't procure through any other means is an egg. Incubating an egg (as described below) will produce an all-new character that can join your party in the main quest!

You'll find your eggs in the incubator on the *Neumann*'s lower deck. To hatch an egg, you must connect with a set number of Amigos in Tag mode. One way to expedite the process is for you and a friend to create a different character on each save file.

Once the egg is hatched, you'll find the new character in the room outside the incubator. Egg characters can join your party and fight just like your classmates, but they level up only through contact with new Amigos in Tag mode.

Know Thy Enemy



Once you've encountered an enemy, it will be added to your bestiary. If you're having a tough time against a particular foe, check its entry in the bestiary for some potentially helpful information (such as the fact that the Magician ant here is largely immune to magical attacks).

Master Macadameus

On the planet Puffoon, you'll meet a legendary martial-arts master named Macadameus. The bearded battler will give you advice on a wide variety of topics (though he's a bit long-winded) and even offer you the chance to spar with him. Over the course of your adventure, you might happen across some mysterious figurines. Trapped within each figure is the soul of a powerful demon. The only way to release one of these optional bosses is to use the figurines while battling Macadameus.

You can also use bean pops while skirmishing with Macadameus to earn experience. Just be sure to flee once you're finished; the wordy warrior can wipe out your entire party with a single blow.

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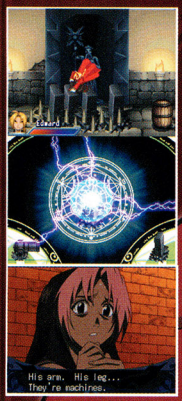

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THE STUFF OF LEGENDS

PREPARE FOR TWILIGHT BY LOOKING BACK AT THE ZELDA SERIES' MOST LEGENDARY MOMENTS.

(Part 3)

We've watched. We've waited. In November, the months—nay, years—of anticipation finally pay off with the release of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess on Wii, followed by the GCN version's arrival in December. In the third (and, at least for now, final) edition of The Stuff of Legends, we're celebrating the monumental occasion by revisiting the Zelda series' greatest secrets, bosses, and plot moments. These aspects have contributed to the franchise's incredible success, and promise to play a part in the wonder of Twilight Princess; you can find out more about the game on page 54. Be warned: the following pages contain plentiful spoilers.

By Chris Hoffman

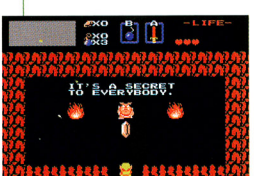
TOP 5 SECRETS

There's something new to uncover around nearly every corner in the Zelda series. Some discoveries have a significant impact on gameplay, while others simply provide remarkable surprises for the intrepid adventurer. The potential to uncover a secret where you least expect it has prompted players to spend countless hours exploring the Hyrulean countryside; below are our favorite finds.

Chris's Hidden Room

A Link to the Past

A Link to the Past came out on the SNES in 1992, but the lid on the game's biggest secret was so tight that knowledge of it became common only in recent years. By quickly dashing from the northwest regions of Hyrule to the castle dungeon's hidden entrance, Link could enter a secret treasure chamber and get a message from a lucky Zelda fan who got to have his name forever etched into the game (albeit not in the GBA version).



It's a Secret to Everybody

The Legend of Zelda

To be completely honest, we don't entirely know what the Moblins are talking about when they tell Link that "it's a secret to everybody" in the original Legend of Zelda. Is the secret that they're hiding in caves? Or is it that they're giving Link money? The cryptic nature of the message makes it one of the series' most intriguing secrets.

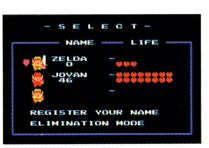
Poultry in Peril

Link's Awakening

Most Zelda fans know that if you get violent with a Cucco, you'll pay for it when the chickenlike animals take revenge by attacking en masse. But what's really weird is when you attack a Cucco with Marin at your side in Link's Awakening. She'll usually scold you for poultry abuse, but once in a while the seemingly innocent girl will encourage you to continue the assault. What a nut.

Second Quest

The Legend of Zelda



Defeating Ganon, completing the Triforce, and rescuing Zelda are rewards in and of themselves, but it gets even better: beating the original Zelda also unlocks an additional quest with redesigned dungeons and substantially greater challenges. Equally cool is the ability to input your name as ZELDA and immediately delve into the second quest.

Hero's Caves

Oracle of Ages, Oracle of Seasons

The Hero's Caves in the Oracle games are arguably the toughest dungeons to reach in any Zelda title. Only by playing through both games via the password-link feature can you access the dungeons, where you'll encounter some of the most difficult puzzles Link's ever faced. The rewards—the best offensive and defensive rings in the games—are worth the effort.

TOP 5 BOSSES

While the dungeons and fields of Hyrule are filled with enemy lackeys and other challenges, it's ultimately the bosses that stand between Link and his goals. Ranging from giant, grotesque versions of everyday creatures to power-hungry megalomaniacs, the bosses in the Zelda games are big, tough, and require clever tactics to defeat. The best bosses manage to strike a perfect balance between challenge and fun.

Arrghus

A Link to the Past

The battle against Arrghus in the Swamp Palace is especially fulfilling due to the way Link visibly breaks down the creature's defenses during the fight. By using the Hookshot, Link can tear off and destroy Arrghus's shield of puffy balls, one piece at a time, leaving its main body exposed and vulnerable. A stony relative of Arrghus also appeared in Four Swords Adventures.

Ganon/Ganondorf

The Legend of Zelda, A Link to the Past, Ocarina of Time, Oracle of Ages, Oracle of Seasons, The Wind Waker, Four Swords Adventures

As if there were any doubt. Whether he appeared in his human form as Ganondorf or sported his bestial appearance as Ganon, the former Gerudo chief is the personification of evil in the Zelda universe. As skilled and powerful as he is ruthless, Ganon is the ultimate foe; his clashes with Link are always deep, multipart affairs that challenge the greatest of heroes. Even the Phantom Ganon specter (specifically the Ocarina of Time version) was wicked cool.

Gohma

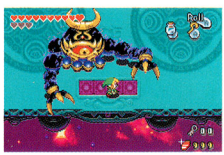
The Legend of Zelda, Link's Awakening, Ocarina of Time, Majora's Mask, The Wind Waker, Four Swords Adventures, The Minish Cap

Gohmas have evolved considerably since their debut in the original Legend of Zelda, first resembling cyclopean crabs, then taking on forms of parasitic arachnids. Our favorite version, however, is the lava-bathing centipedelike creature guarding Dragon Roost Cavern in The Wind Waker. Grappling over Gohma to drop rocks on the creature's shell made for one memorable battle.

Vaati

Four Swords, Four Swords Adventures, The Minish Cap

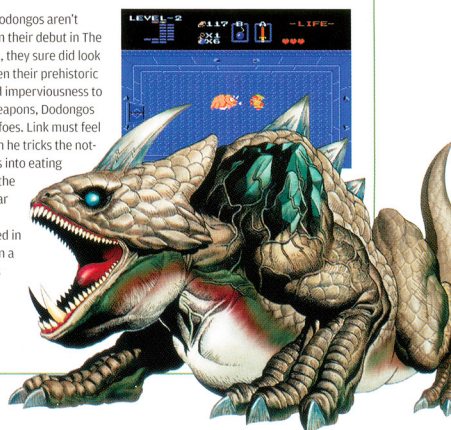
Ganon may be the Zelda series' number-one bad guy, but wind sorcerer Vaati comes in at number two on the evil scale. Not only did the conniving magic-user betray his own master and nearly conquer Hyrule on more than one occasion, but Link's battles against him have been some of the most involved yet. Their three-part battle in The Minish Cap saw Link shrinking and actually entering Vaati to defeat him from within.



Dodongo

The Legend of Zelda, Ocarina of Time, Majora's Mask, Oracle of Ages, Oracle of Seasons, Four Swords Adventures

We know that Dodongos aren't dinosaurs, but in their debut in The Legend of Zelda, they sure did look like 'em. Between their prehistoric appearance and imperviousness to conventional weapons, Dodongos made for great foes. Link must feel a little bad when he tricks the not-so-bright beasts into eating explosives, but the Dodongos are far from extinct; they've appeared in several games in a variety of forms over the years.



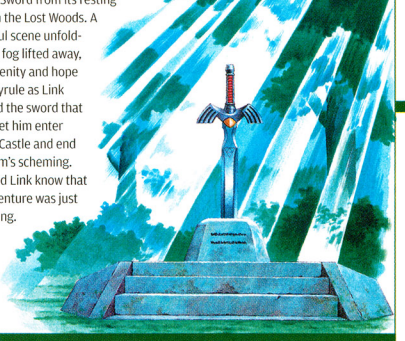
TOP 5 PLOT MOMENTS

The Zelda series isn't just about fantastic gameplay. It's also about unforgettable stories of heroism and adventure, filled with events that etch themselves indelibly into players' minds. No epic journey would be complete without dramatic, world-changing revelations, and seeing these moments unfold gives all the more meaning to Link's battles. Many more jaw-dropping plot moments are guaranteed in Twilight Princess.

The Sword in the Stone

A Link to the Past

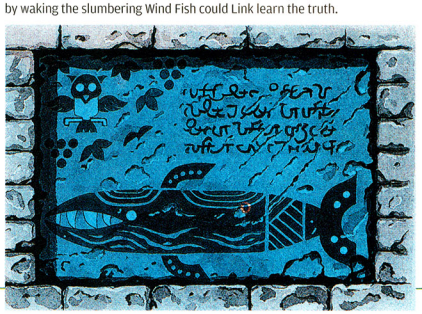
After acquiring the pendants of courage, power, and wisdom, Link was finally able to retrieve the Master Sword from its resting place in the Lost Woods. A beautiful scene unfolded—the fog lifted away, and serenity and hope filled Hyrule as Link grasped the sword that would let him enter Hyrule Castle and end Agahnim's scheming. Little did Link know that his adventure was just beginning.



Just a Dream

Link's Awakening

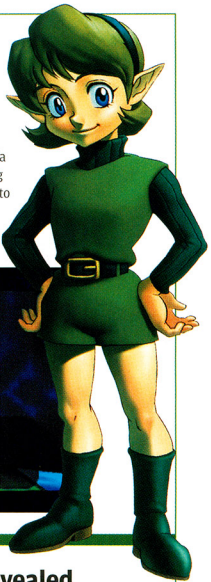
Koholint Island was a pretty strange place—one inhabitant was a letter-writing goat who pretended she was Princess Peach—but who would have guessed it was all a dream? That was the shocking revelation Link learned when he entered the Southern Shrine. Could all of Link's new friends be merely figments of his imagination? Only by waking the slumbering Wind Fish could Link learn the truth.



Saria's Sacrifice

Ocarina of Time

Saria was Link's one true friend in Kokiri Forest. Even when the rest of the forest folk distrusted Link, Saria was proud to aid him telepathically whenever she could. So it was a bittersweet moment when Saria was revealed as the Sage of the Forest Temple during Link's adult years; her friendship was transformed into power Link needed to save Hyrule, but at the cost of her physical form departing for the Sacred Realm, possibly forever.



Sheik Revealed

Ocarina of Time

Anyone who's played Super Smash Bros. Melee knows that Sheik is none other than Princess Zelda, but when the helpful yet mysterious Sheik revealed her true identity in Ocarina of Time, fans were stunned. In a world ruled by Ganondorf, Zelda found refuge with the Sheikah people; her stay with them transformed the passive princess into an enigmatic, tomboyish, red-eyed youth with ninjalike abilities.

Beneath the Waves

The Wind Waker

Once Link collected three pearls and conquered the Tower of the Gods, he found himself transported to a place long forgotten: the old realm of Hyrule, which had been abandoned under the sea. Seeing what had become of the beloved land from Ocarina of Time was simultaneously amazing and heartbreaking, and it was but the first in a series of revelations concerning Hyrule's past.

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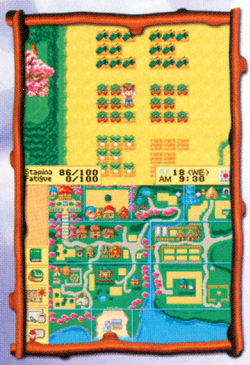

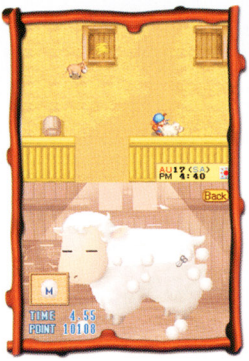

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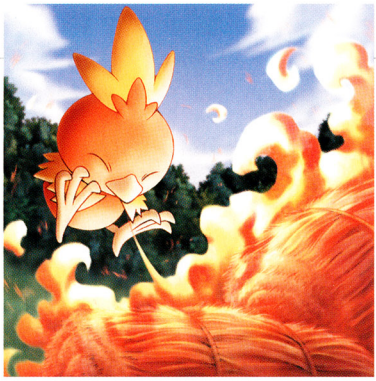


STAY IN THE LOOP

Get drawn into Pokémon Ranger on Nintendo DS, where it'll take a steady hand to thwart the dastardly plans of the Go-Rock Squad.

By Chris Shepperd

The Pokémon franchise has seen a bonanza of new game concepts recently. Pokémon Mystery Dungeon opened up tactical combat and new items to the Pokémon world; now Pokémon Ranger looks to take the franchise in yet another new direction. Whereas the original series and Mystery Dungeon lean toward RPG-styled gameplay, the touch-screen-oriented Ranger challenges your dexterity more than your wits. But to be the best, you'd better have both.

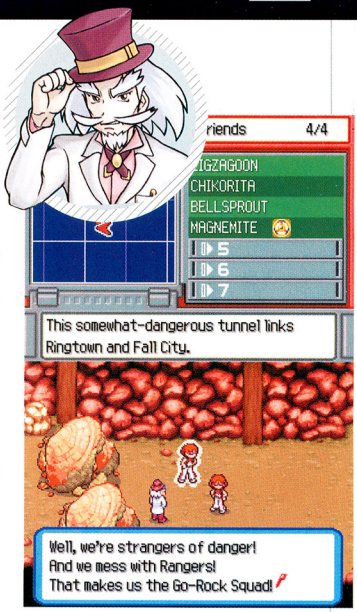
OUT ON YOUR OWN

Pokémon Ranger takes place in the Fiore region, where humans and wild Pokémon live side by side in harmony. Well, usually. But occasional mishaps occur, and that's when the Rangers step in. The Rangers are highly trained Pokémon specialists in charge of keeping the peace and protecting wild Pokémon. They patrol the Fiore region for signs of trouble. It's tough work, but rewarding—the Rangers are well-respected everywhere they go. You begin as a rookie Ranger—after you pester Spenser, one of the leaders of the Rangers, he'll be willing to give you a shot. You'll have to learn on the fly as a recent rash of incidents has completely absorbed the Rangers' free time.

As a newbie Ranger, you can't expect to get the best jobs right away. You'll spend a lot of your time learning the ropes around your team's hometown. You won't have to tackle missions completely on your own, however—the supporting cast of Rangers and other folks will help you along the way. As you demonstrate your Ranger talents, people like Spenser will begin to notice and put you in charge of more-difficult and more-important missions.

It doesn't take long before your new Ranger skills are tested. A covert band of evildoers called the Go-Rock Squad has come onto the scene, but the squad's plans are a mystery at first; many of the early missions involve doing reconnaissance work on the Go-Rocks. One thing is for sure—they have their own means of controlling Pokémon, and they don't intend to use their power for good.

Your journeys will take you all over the Fiore region,



Not only do the the fiendish Go-Rocks cause trouble everywhere they go, they insist on rhyming everything they say.

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a vast area that includes four major towns, as well as an assortment of caves, jungles, and mountain passes. Moving around is easy—you can use the DS's touch screen for every task in the game. Just drag the stylus in the direction you want the main character to walk, and he'll follow right along. The upper screen keeps track of all your vital information, including your current Pokémon party, and displays a map to show you the direction of roaming Pokémon and important landmarks.

Everywhere you go, you'll encounter Pokémon (although some are easier to find than others). Often, though, the Pokémon don't take kindly to your intrusions, and you'll frequently have to calm the misbehaved creatures.

Use Poké Assists like the bubbles Mudkip forms to help catch really tough Pokémon.

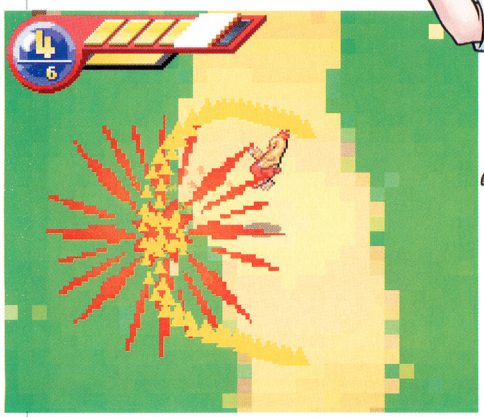
GOING IN CIRCLES

During your journey, you'll have to confront various kinds of Pokémon, large and small. It's not exactly combat—the role of a Pokémon Ranger isn't to fight Pokémon, but to make an emotional connection with them. But the Pokémon don't always see it your way, and will struggle against your will to rein them in. To ensnare a Pokémon, you'll use a Styler, the official device of the Rangers (which looks conveniently like your DS's stylus). Not only do you use the Styler to wrap up your target Pokémon; it receives messages from other Rangers throughout the game to help guide you to your next objectives, lets you look up Pokémon in the Browser (the Rangers' version of a Pokédex), and allows you to save your game progress.

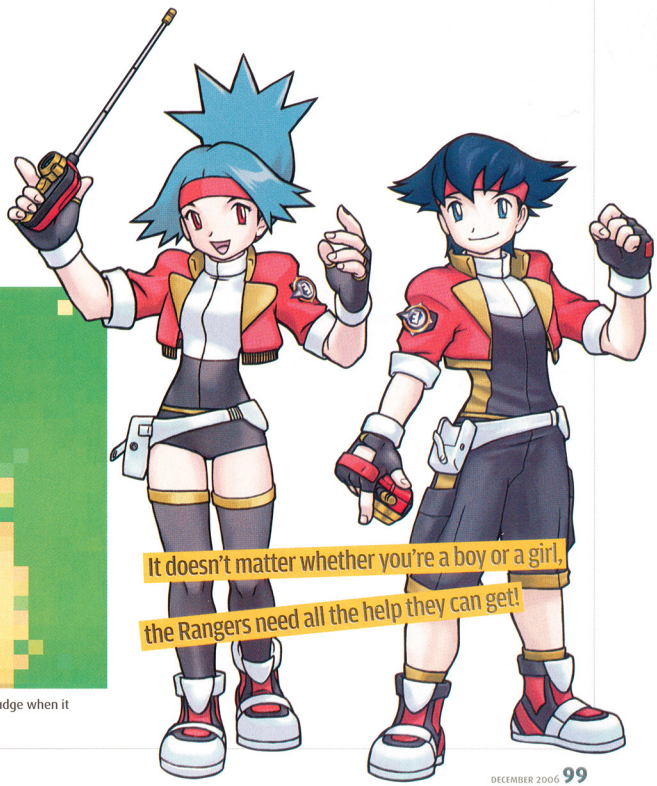
Most of the time, you need only to bump into a wild Pokémon to begin a battle; you and it will square off on an empty patch of land. Using the Styler, you must draw a certain number of continuous circles around it—as soon as you begin circling a Pokémon, a number will flash over its head to show you how many more times you must circle it. (Tough Pokémon typically require more circles to capture.) You must circle a Pokémon the requisite number of times without lifting the stylus—if you do lift it, the circle count will start over.

Sounds easy enough, right? Well, the Pokémon aren't going to just stand there and let you do your work—they have all kinds of tricks to make it more difficult for you. First, if the Pokémon comes in contact with the line you're drawing, the line will disintegrate. Pokémon don't stay in one place, either—they'll dart all over the screen, making it tricky for you to lasso them in. In fact, some Pokémon will chase after the Styler as you're drawing. Each Pokémon also has an attack that attempts to disrupt your line. A Pokémon's attack is much more potent than a simple bump into the line, however—usually an attack will both break your line and damage your Styler. For example,

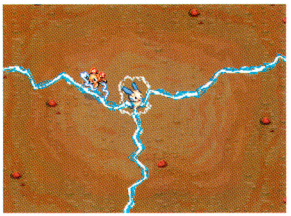
Don't waste too much time trying to catch a Pokémon—it will eventually flee from battle.



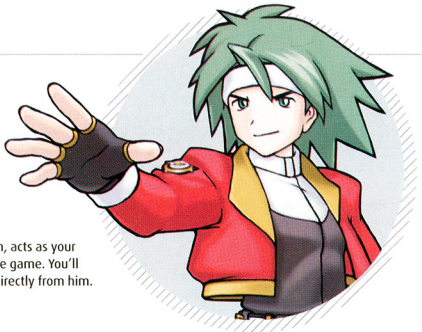
Watch for patterns in a Pokémon's movement and try to judge when it is least likely to attack before beginning your circles.



It doesn't matter whether you're a boy or a girl, the Rangers need all the help they can get!



Plusle's or Minun's poké assist will stop Pokémon in their tracks, making them easy to catch.



Spenser, the leader of Ringtown, acts as your boss and mentor throughout the game. You'll receive most of your missions directly from him.

Poliwhirl spews a long jet of water from its mouth—if it hits an already formed line or if you attempt to draw across the stream, your Styler will take a hit. If your Styler takes enough damage, it's game over. Additionally, if you take too long to pin down your opponent, it will eventually flee back into the wild.

Fortunately, you have a few techniques of your own to help you wrap up the feisty Pokémon. Most importantly, you can use the powers of the Pokémon you've already caught to aid you. Pokémon have skills called Poké Assists, which let them create walls of tall grass that slow down quick-moving Pokémon, make your snagging line extralong (and thus easier to loop around your foe), and more. Type-matching remains important during battles, as well—the effect of a friend Pokémon's Poké Assist will increase or decrease depending on your opposing group's affiliation (groups are much like types from previous Pokémon games). There's a catch to using wild Pokémon in battle, however—after you use one, it will depart from your team and return to the wild. You have one Pokémon pal available all the time, though, depending on whether you choose to play as a boy or girl. If you're a boy, Minun will be your sidekick; if you play as a girl, Plusle will help you on your mission. Both of the Pokémon have the same ability: their discharge Poké Assists shoot out beams of electricity to help stun Pokémon. The Pokémon need a while to recharge between uses, but their stamina and power increase as you progress through the story.

TAKE THE FIELD

The Pokémon you snare aren't only for helping you in battles; you can use Pokémon during exploration for all kinds of other purposes. Each Pokémon has a Field Move—you can use a Pokémon's Field Move to crush a rock in your path, to shake a tree to get a different Pokémon to fall out, or to recharge your Styler's energy. The touch-screen interface makes it really easy to use Field Moves; for example, if you encounter a fire that you want Water-group Mudkip to extinguish, you simply click and hold the stylus on Mudkip, then draw a line to the flames. Mudkip will put the fire out—but just like in battle, a Pokémon will use its skills only once before taking off.

QUICK ON THE DRAW

You don't have to be a hard-core Pokémaniac to get into Pokémon Ranger—the unique gameplay ensures that even someone who hasn't played a Pokémon game before can enjoy it. But even if you know Pokémon like the back of your hand, the new combat techniques, new exploration, and new enemies will keep you engaged for a good while.

Field Moves are a key element to exploring Fiore. You can see what type of obstacle a Pokémon can clear by tapping the Pokémon.

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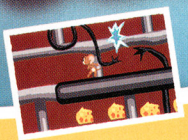

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GAME BOY ADVANCE

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ACTRAISER

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
DEVELOPER: QUINTET
PUBLISHER: ENIX
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 1991
COVERED IN ISSUES: 27, 31
MAXIMUM # OF FOLLOWERS: ~4,600

In Enix's daring genre-blending experiment, having a god complex was not a bad thing.

Many games are known for incredible action. Far fewer make their mark through civilization-building strategy. But exceptionally rare is the game that manages to combine both successfully. Such is the appeal of ActRaiser, a game than not only transcended genres, but managed to set new standards in graphics and music while doing so.

In ActRaiser, you play the part of a deity who takes a very hands-on approach to his duty of nursing his world back to health. Each stage begins with a dizzying Mode 7 descent from the heavens as your spirit breathes life into a warrior statue, which you'll use to hack, slash, and spellcast your way through the beautifully drawn 2-D landscape, avoiding obstacles and collecting power-ups as you go.

Once you've conquered a region's first act, the game switches to an overhead perspective of the land you've just rescued. Using a flying, buck-naked cherub as your emissary, it's up to you to guide the progress of the fledgling civilization—harnessing "miracles" like lightning, rain, wind, and earthquakes to sculpt the landscape, and directing how your followers construct their town. While your people labor on the ground below, you'll control the cherub in real time and slay invading monsters with your arrows. Provided you're a benevolent master, your followers will prosper—they'll increase in number, master new technologies (which you can take to other lands), discover power-ups they'll present to you as offerings, and learn to seal the monsters' lairs. Followers also act as experience points; you'll level up as the population increases. Inevitably, however, monsters once again attack the prospering land, and you'll have to re-enter side-scrolling battle to defeat the area's wicked boss and permanently drive evil from the area.

In addition to combining action and simulation perfectly, ActRaiser boasted one of the richest soundtracks in gaming; Yuzo Koshiro's symphonic classical score was enough to make you think an orchestra was playing within the SNES. Despite ActRaiser's monumental achievements, a sequel that came out two years later failed to live up to the success of the original (it didn't feature any simulation elements), and a rumored handheld version (called ActRemix) never materialized.

Whether ActRaiser ever gets a proper revival is up to the folks at Quintet and Square Enix, but the original will live on as one of the 16-bit era's greatest. –CHRIS H.

Have a favorite classic game you'd like to see revisited?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback.
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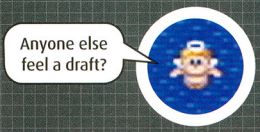


THE MUSIC MAN

Yuzo Koshiro, the musician responsible for ActRaiser's amazing score, is arguably the greatest game-music composer of the 16-bit age. Equally comfortable composing classical or techno, Koshiro built up a faithful fan base by creating some of the most memorable game music of the late '80s and early '90s. In addition to ActRaiser 1 and 2, Koshiro's works include The Revenge of Shinobi, Super Adventure Island, and the Streets of Rage series. Koshiro is still composing, and his work can be heard in upcoming games such as Konami's Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin and Atlus's Etrian Odyssey, both for DS.

STREETS OF RAGE

SUPER ADVENTURE ISLAND

THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI

REVIEWS

In-depth reviews of the latest games

These ninjas don't sneak around. Naruto: Clash of Ninja 2 makes some noise.

Children of Mana, Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent, and more.

106
Elite Beat Agents for the DS does rhythm gaming with a light touch.

104
Magical Starsign takes us to new worlds on the DS.

108
FINAL FANTASY V offers old-school RPG thrills on the GBA.

STAY FOR A SPELL

SLOW BURN

MAGICAL STARSIGN

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: BROWNIE BROWN
ESRB: EVERYONE

The latest from developer Brownie Brown (Sword of Mana, Mother 3) takes a very straightforward approach to the genre—from a pure gameplay standpoint, it doesn't offer much that role-playing veterans haven't seen before—but it does so with such charm that it's hard not to like it. Unless you're the brooding type who needs all your RPGs full of gloom and doom. Starring six young students from a magic academy, the story here is more Harry Potter than Final Fantasy, and starts as an intergalactic search for the kids' missing teacher. Eventually it becomes something more as the students find themselves ensnared in a much bigger plot, but the game is pretty silly for the most part, rife with otter space pirates and sentient pottery. That light-hearted spirit is a breath of fresh air in a category that usually takes itself too seriously, and when the dramatic moments do come, they're all the more potent as a result. An eminently likable cast and generally excellent writing (the over-the-top humor occasionally misses the mark) drive the narrative, and do their best to keep things interesting even when the story starts to drag around the midway point. Of special note is Mokka, a sarcastic robot with a dry sense of humor and fantastic deadpan delivery.

Of course, the first thing that stands out about Magical Starsign is the gorgeous graphics. With its lush, brightly colored environments and intricate sprite work, this is one of the most visually impressive games on the DS (and not a single polygon in sight). It makes great use of the dual screens to display some stunning backdrops and massive bosses, and there are even CG animated cinematics for some of the game's big moments. The art direction is a bit on the adorable side, so it may not appeal to everyone, but it fits the game like a glove.

Unfortunately, all the intriguing characters and pretty visuals in the universe can't save Magical Starsign from its unremarkable gameplay. The random battles are among the most unexciting I've suffered through in years; the focus on magic and an astrological chart that affects your characters' elemental strength seems cool at first, but the developers simply don't take it far enough. You learn new spells at a glacial pace (maxing out at only five per character), and none of them feel particularly special or imaginative. As a result, there's very little strategy involved—most skirmishes devolve into hitting enemies with the same basic spells over and over. It's especially tedious later in the game when battles can drag on for four or five minutes apiece. Exacerbating the problem is some exceedingly linear, by-the-numbers dungeon design. There are no real puzzles to speak of, and for a game that can be controlled entirely via the touch screen, it's almost shocking how little the dungeons take advantage of it. Traipsing through these uninspired areas and engaging in lengthy, mundane battles every few moments can weigh pretty heavily on the eyelids. And the soundtrack doesn't do much to rouse you; there are a few good tunes sprinkled here and there, but most of it is pretty forgettable.

If you have the patience to see it through, Magical Starsign is fairly satisfying, especially if you value good writing and compelling characters over deep gameplay. It's just a shame that so much of the journey feels like a chore. —STEVE T.

Let's see those Harry Potter brats take on something like this.

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT WII CHANNEL WILL YOU TURN TO FIRST?

In addition to great games, Wii will offer a slew of new channels, including ones that make use of your Internet connection. We asked our reviews which channel they're most excited about.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

Virtual Console all the way! But since you have to download them through the Wii Shop Channel, I guess that'll be my first stop.

CHRIS SHEPPERD

I take a lot of photos that end up sitting on my computer. I'm eager to use the Photo Channel to share my precious moments with my friends.

ANDY MYERS

What little time I've spent with the Mii Channel has me hooked. It's the most fun I've had with a character-creation tool, and I can't wait to explore it thoroughly.

GEORGE SINFIELD

The Wii Shop Channel has lots of potential—not only for retro games, but for the distribution of small, creative new games. What's Wii's answer to Geometry Wars? We'll find out.

STEVE THOMASON

The first thing I'll do upon booting up my system will be to check out the Wii Shop Channel. Twilight Princess can wait—there are classic Genesis games to be downloaded!

PETE MICHAUD

Since growing a beard (pg. 47), I have a strange desire to explore the Mii Channel. I think I'll probably spend a lot of quality time outfitting Mii-self (and friends) with gnarly haircuts and facial hair.

TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

RATING: 4.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: EIDOS
DEVELOPER: HUMANSOFT
ESRB: TEEN

The console versions of Tomb Raider: Legend have gone a long way toward restoring gamers' faith in the franchise, but the DS iteration represents a major step backward for Ms. Croft. The buxom protagonist's dual-screen debut stumbles due to unresponsive controls, lackluster animation, and oft-confusing environments. Though the 3-D engine is fairly impressive by DS standards, it's sometimes difficult to discern what you're supposed to do next (despite the fact that movement is restricted primarily to two dimensions). Glitchy collision detection only compounds the problem, ensuring that any groove you might get into soon comes to a screeching halt.

Then there's the ridiculous battle system. When you encounter an enemy, the bottom screen (which usually displays your inventory) will switch to a first-person view, and you'll tap your foes with the stylus to shoot them. It's an incredibly awkward and ill-conceived approach that exemplifies why it's a bad idea to switch between touch-screen and button controls on the fly. The game also introduces the occasional motorcycle stage in a further attempt to mix things up, but the driving is too primitive to satisfy its role as a fun diversion.

In the future, hopefully Eidos's commitment to rejuvenating the series will carry over to the handheld installments, but this uninspired port feels like it belongs to the crumbling franchise of a few years ago rather than the new and improved Legend. —STEVE T.

BELIEVE IT!

TOP RAMEN

NARUTO: CLASH OF NINJA 2

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PUBLISHER: TOMY/D3PA
DEVELOPER: 8ING
ESRB: TEEN

When it comes to blonde-haired, blue-eyed-ninja-based games, Naruto has cornered the market, and rightly so. Naruto's second outing on the GCN is about as solid a follow-up as you can expect from a fighting series, and it lands on store shelves barely six months after its predecessor.

From the get-go, the biggest difference you'll notice in the sequel is the inclusion of a four-player mode, which makes this game a must-buy for any fan of the original. Each player can now shift his stance at any time to face any opponent in a pseudo-3-D arena; however, once you're facing an opponent, the fighting takes place on a typical two-dimension plain. With the right combination of skillful Naruto players, this mode can be extremely enjoyable, as well as competitive. The story mode is quite a bit more interesting than in the first Naruto game: you'll engage in dangerous three-on-one or one-on-two battles in the never-ending quest to become Hokage (Master Ninja).

8ing has also upped the ante by boosting the roster significantly. This time around, players can choose from 23 ninjas (some of which must be unlocked), each sporting their own variety of combos, attacks, and specials—even returning characters have received slight attack upgrades. For avid Naruto fans, there are plenty of bonus features to unlock and purchase from the store (for in-game currency, of course), including art galleries, character profiles, and voice tests.

It's a tad upsetting to see such a robust sequel follow so closely on the heels of the original; couldn't it have been released instead of the first game? Either way, Clash of Ninja 2 is a solid fighter that should appeal to Naruto fans and fighting-game fans alike. —PETE M.

C'MON, FEEL THE NOISE

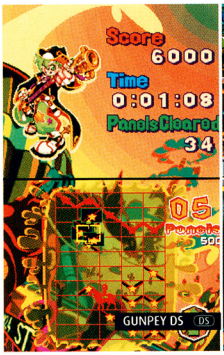
HARD ROCK

ELITE BEAT AGENTS

RATING: 9.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: iNiS
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

I forget to breathe when I play Elite Beat Agents. The stylus-driven tap-to-dance gameplay is so intense and so wholly entertaining that every ounce of my concentration is spent on playing the game. It's the liveliest, funniest, deepest, and most incredibly challenging handheld rhythm game to date, and probably a little too difficult for some players to handle in its late stages and advanced difficulty levels. That said, following the ingenious beat programs of the game's 19 songs (all of which have different sequences for each of the four difficulty levels) is never frustrating. You may stray from the beat as you tap, drag, and spin your stylus on the markers, but you'll have fun watching what happens when your performance is lacking. Things start to go badly for the scenario's protagonist, and the nattily dressed agents who've been sent to save the day trip and fall with comic exasperation. Of course, it's even more entertaining when your mind clicks into gear and you're one with the music, hitting multibeat runs perfectly in sync with the music, and earning bonus multipliers that help you achieve elite-agent status. The storyline hits a high note when you do well, too, and the shuffling spies reward you with jumps, pirouettes, and synchronized stepping worthy of a '70s-era variety show. Speaking of the old days, musical highlights include scenarios set to sound-alike versions of The Stray Cats' "Rock this Town" and David Bowie's "Let's Dance." If you're more of a current-music fan, you'll be happy to see the agents arrive on a spinning teacup to a cover of Good Charlotte's "The Anthem" and shuttle in by helicopter for a rendition of Jamiroquai's "Canned Heat" (the song that Napoleon Dynamite dances to at the school assembly). Here's another crowd pleaser: co-op and versus play for up to four players. Versus options even allow you to share the game with single-card DS Download play, and they offer new scenarios based on competition themes. So, go forth, help the Elite Beat Agents save the world one step at a time, groove to the music, and hit the beats. Just don't forget to breathe. —GEORGE S.



GUNPEY DS

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI
DEVELOPER: Q ENTERTAINMENT
ESRB: EVERYONE

Moving-piece puzzle games have found a good home on the DS. Though Gunpey has history on other handhelds, its line-segment-sliding gameplay is best suited for touch control. The play area (placed over a variety of lush backgrounds) is divided into five columns in which puzzle pieces float up from the bottom of the screen. You slide the pieces up and down to create continuous lines, and all of the segments of a completed line disappear. It's easy to achieve proficiency in the game, and so difficult to fail, you may find that your skill and your interest in the game plateau quickly. Multiplayer matches are good for variety (you can upload a demo to other DS owners, but Versus-mode games require multiple game cards). Also, a minigame with unlockable elements and a simple sound sequencer are fun diversions. —GEORGE S.

JUSTICE LEAGUE HEROES: THE FLASH

RATING: 5.5

PLATFORM: GAME BOY ADVANCE
PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: WAYFORWARD
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

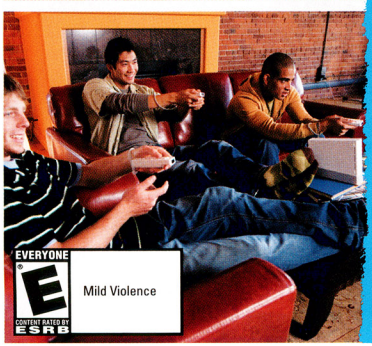
I feel a little sorry for the Flash. Compared to his Justice League colleagues like Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman, he's hardly the most exciting superhero on the roster. Unfortunately, that lack of exhilaration shows through in his game. At its core, Justice League Heroes: The Flash is a traditional beat-'em-up–a genre that thrives on attack variety–but the Flash relies on only basic punches and kicks. At least he has speed powers to spice things up, but not nearly enough; though slowing time and creating whirlwinds are cool, they deplete your special-move meter so quickly that you're forced to conserve power for when you need it. The result is a game that gets repetitive pretty quickly, in spite of decently diverse enemies and nifty boss battles. JLH: The Flash isn't bad, but like the man himself, it could be a bit more compelling. —CHRIS H.

JUSTICE LEAGUE HEROES

RATING: 3.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: SENSORY SWEEP STUDIOS
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

It may not be a Superman game, per se, but Justice League Heroes does feature the Man of Steel as one of its playable characters (alongside Wonder Woman, Batman, and The Flash), and it looks like his long-running video game curse has carried over. This dull, clunky mess of a 3-D beat-'em-up suffers from sloppy hit detection, brutal slowdown, and yawn-inducing levels that throw the same basic grunts at you over and over (the bad guys do vary in appearance every few stages, but the only significant difference between them is how rapidly they fire their assorted ray guns). Top it off with some moronic boss battles and comically bad dialogue, and you've got yet another injustice committed against DC's beleaguered heroes. —STEVE T.



EVERYONE

E

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Violence

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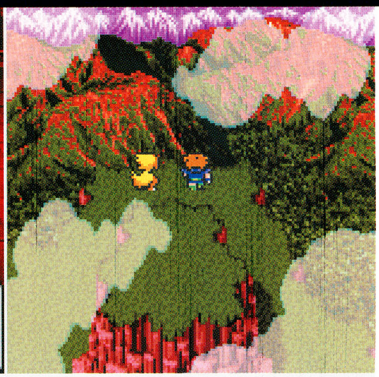


FANTASTIC FIVE!

FIVE IS ALIVE

FINAL FANTASY V ADVANCE

RATING: 8.5

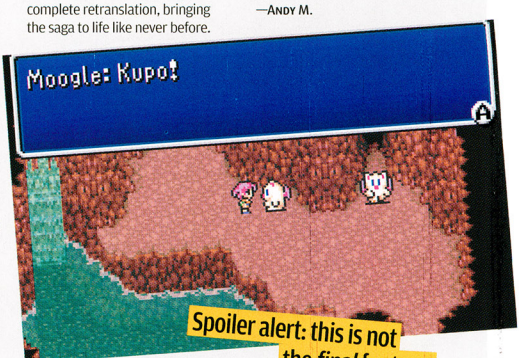
PLATFORM: GAME BOY ADVANCE
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX
ESRB: EVERYONE

When Square Enix began re-releasing its classic FINAL FANTASY titles on PlayStation One, I was ecstatic. Not only would I get to play my favorite RPGs without having to drag my classic Nintendo consoles out of the closet; I'd get to play FINAL FANTASY V, the only game in the series' glorious 16-bit era that was never released in North America. But when I finally got my hands on the game, something was amiss. Maybe it was the shoddy translation, or the slowdown-riddled battles, or the lengthy load times; in the end, the game just didn't live up to my expectations. So when I heard V was coming to GBA, I met the news with minimal enthusiasm, thinking there was no way it could meet the standard set by last year's stellar offering, FINAL FANTASY IV Advance. Well, I was wrong. FINAL FANTASY V not only lives up to its namesake, but also delivers the definitive version of what is now apparent as one of the best titles in the series.

Having enjoyed nearly every FINAL FANTASY game, I realize that last statement is a bit lofty. But there are brilliant aspects to FINAL FANTASY V Advance that set it apart from its peers. The most notable of these is the jobs and abilities system, which allows players to change their party members' job classes and abilities on the fly. This unique feature set adds an unprecedented level of customization. Craft a White Mage who's adept with a blade, a Ninja who can cast Black magic, and a Knight who can summon monsters—the possibilities are endless. The game has a way of encouraging you to experiment with job and ability combinations, so much that you'll have to get creative with your character makeups to defeat some of the toughest bosses. The farther you get in the game, the more jobs you'll discover—there are 26 jobs in all, four new to the GBA version—and the more abilities you'll learn.

If jobs are the bread of the game, then abilities are the butter. Learned abilities can take a number of different forms. You'll spend the majority of your gameplay time fighting monsters by using the familiar menu-based battle system. But what makes the system so unique is how much control your learned abilities give you over each character's menu commands. Many abilities take the form of commands that, when assigned to a character, will show up in his menu. For instance, as a Ranger, a party member can learn the Rapid Fire ability, which allows him to fire four arrows in a row by selecting Rapid Fire in the battle menu. Once he's learned the ability, he can change jobs but retain the ability, allowing him to perform four attacks in one turn and with any weapon. There are nearly 100 abilities to learn, each one with its own set of possibilities. This can be overwhelming, especially for the completist who wants to master every job—a task that will be excessively tedious. But it's also incredibly rewarding, and gives you a sense of accomplishment that goes beyond reaching the next experience level.

Even with its strong focus on jobs and abilities, the game doesn't lose sight of the attributes that fans expect to be of the highest quality in a FINAL FANTASY game, including the story. In stark opposition to the PlayStation version, FINAL FANTASY V Advance has undergone a complete retranslation, bringing the saga to life like never before. Your quest across multiple worlds will be thick with towns, characters, dungeons, Chocobos, elemental crystals, and crazy plot twists; and the story manages to stay compelling throughout. It's classic FINAL FANTASY, but with less hand-holding as you experience the saga and explore the worlds. There's so much content packed in to this title—including the challenging extra dungeons and bosses that are exclusive to the GBA version—that you'll be shocked at just how extensive a handheld RPG can be. Square Enix has done a fantastic job with both the additional content and the core game, offering a package that will entertain players both old and new for hours on end. For a fan of classic RPGs, FINAL FANTASTY V Advance is not to be missed.
—ANDY M.



Spoiler alert: this is not the *final* fantasy.

SUMMON NIGHT: SWORDCRAFT STORY 2

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: GAME BOY ADVANCE
PUBLISHER: ATLUS
DEVELOPER: FLIGHT-PLAN
ESRB: TEEN

I greatly enjoyed the first Summon Night: Swordcraft Story, but the sequel surpasses the original in almost every respect. A lot of the basics are the same—there are still eight dialogue paths through the game (the combination of two possible heroes and four possible Guardian Beasts), there's still a heavy emphasis on forging your own weapons, and the game's action-packed, real-time, side-view battle system is still intact. But Summon Night: Swordcraft Story 2 really kicks things up in terms of game structure and presentation. Instead of earning new weapon-making skills at preset plot points (as in the previous game), how and when you forge weapons is now entirely up to you, and the choice of materials now plays a big role in the weapon you create. By forging, upgrading, disassembling, and reforging weapons, you can craft an arsenal—200 weapons total—to truly call your own, which makes the weapon-creation process much more satisfying.

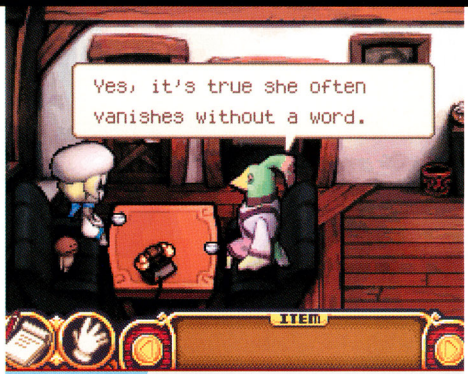
A much-deeper plot adds a lot to the game as well. The story balances comedy and drama easily, as quirky characters, amusing dialogue, and semi-surprising twists weave in and out to create an entertaining story. And unlike the first game, Summon Night 2 sends you to far-flung locales like steam-filled hot springs, robot factories, and tropical beaches instead of focusing on one huge primary dungeon. The game just has a grander feel overall—plus tons of optional content opens up after the credits roll. My only complaints about Summon Night 2 are that the battle system hasn't evolved much since the first game, and that some cool features (like giant-mech battles and the ability to use weapons to get past obstacles outside of battle) feel underutilized. Nonetheless, Atlus has delivered a quality RPG once again. —CHRIS H.

AVATAR: THE LAST AIRBENDER

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: THQ STUDIO AUSTRALIA
ESRB: EVERYONE

There are plenty of license-based games available these days, and almost all of them seem to rely more on name recognition than on game quality. Avatar is the exception to the rule, and that's what drew me into it. It's a beautiful game that, license or not, is fun to play. It controls like a standard hack-'n'-slash with a three-quarters overhead view. You'll roam around various environments, encountering NPCs and enemies alike. The game does well with its detailed backdrops and its spiritual musical score, though it leaves something to be desired in the objectives category: Often you'll be asked to deliver an item from person A to person B. Later, person B will tell you to go back and talk to person A—which can get old, to say the least. Nonetheless, Avatar exceeds expectations. Fans of the show and newbies alike have much to enjoy here. —PETE M.



GET TO THE POINT

ON THE LAM

TOUCH DETECTIVE

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: ATLUS
DEVELOPER: SUCCESS/BEEWORKS
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

When the DS was first revealed, games like Touch Detective seemed like the perfect fit—choose-your-own-adventure titles that utilize the touch screen seemed destined to flow from developers like water from a faucet. It hasn't exactly been the case; Trace Memory and Phoenix Wright have been oases in an otherwise barren genre. After playing Touch Detective, it's easy to see why—there's a lot more to making a good game than just putting it on the right platform. Most importantly, it has to have interesting characters, tell a compelling story, and employ a smart interface. Touch Detective succeeds to some extent at all of these goals, but not enough to create a totally engrossing game.

It's an unenviable task to come up with storylines that deal with unsolved crimes, but spin them to make them palpable to youngsters. For the most part, Touch Detective's stories are endearing and tame enough for all ages, although for older gamers they'll border on the inane. But the more aggravating aspect to the storytelling is what it doesn't say—you're often left at the end of a conversation with no clue what to do next. You end up having to poke around every locale and talk to every person until you trigger the next event. This kind of snipe hunting makes for a longer game, but certainly not a more entertaining one.

The characters in Touch Detective are an eclectic bunch, to say the least—from the darling, naïve miss Penelope to the creepy head of the planetarium, all have very distinct personalities. That is, all except the main character, Mackenzie—her meek, lackluster personality is dullsville. In contrast, the antics of her smart-aleck rival detective, Chloe, are consistently offbeat and humorous. Though the rest of the actors are often witty, they don't always stay in character, and quotes from movies and other outside sources often fall flat, as well as pull you out of the fantasy.

There's really nothing to dislike about the touch-screen-only interface—it gets the job done in the simplest way possible. However, the top screen is woefully underutilized—except for occasional internal monologue by Mackenzie, it's seldom used. Experienced gamers will probably look for more than what Touch Detective has to offer—both in story and gameplay—but Touch Detective will be a nice diversion for the younger set. —CHRIS S.

KHAAAAAAAN!

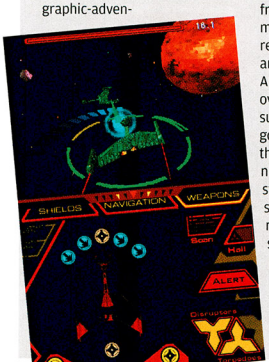
FAILED ENTERPRISE

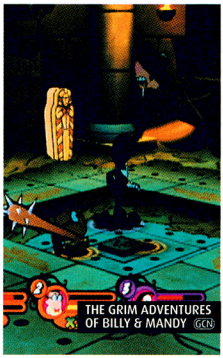
STAR TREK: TACTICAL ASSAULT

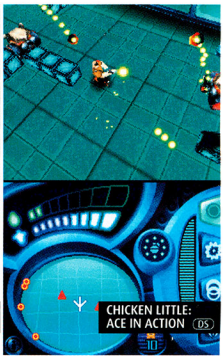
RATING: 5.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **BETHESDA**
DEVELOPER: **QUICKSILVER SOFTWARE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Star Trek: Tactical Assault starts out very promising. The first mission is encouragingly faithful to the spirit of the show, allowing you to use diplomacy and deductive reasoning rather than brute force to complete your objective (though the latter option is available as well). Then the game, inexplicably, all but abandons that open-ended, graphic-adventure-style approach and settles for becoming a clunky space-shooter. The word "tactical" in the title is a bit of a misnomer; you can upgrade your ship's capabilities between missions, but battles essentially consist of maneuvering your slow-moving vessel and blasting enemy targets whenever your weapons finish charging. Although there is some strategy involved in focusing on one section of your opponent's shields and determining how best to use your emergency power, it's all very basic, and the end result feels much more like an action game—and a bland, repetitive one at that—than a tactical sim. The game can also be incredibly frustrating; there are far too many missions in which you're responsible for the safety of another craft, yet due to spotty AI feel like you have no control over whether that craft actually survives. Star Trek fans are going to geek out (and I mean that lovingly) over the opportunity to command a Federation starship, especially via a touch-screen interface so gloriously reminiscent of the original TV series. But like so many recent iterations of the franchise (*Star Wars* fans think *they've* got it bad), Tactical Assault ultimately disappoints. —**STEVE T.**







THE GRIM ADVENTURES OF BILLY & MANDY

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO GAMECUBE**
PUBLISHER: **MIDWAY**
DEVELOPER: **HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

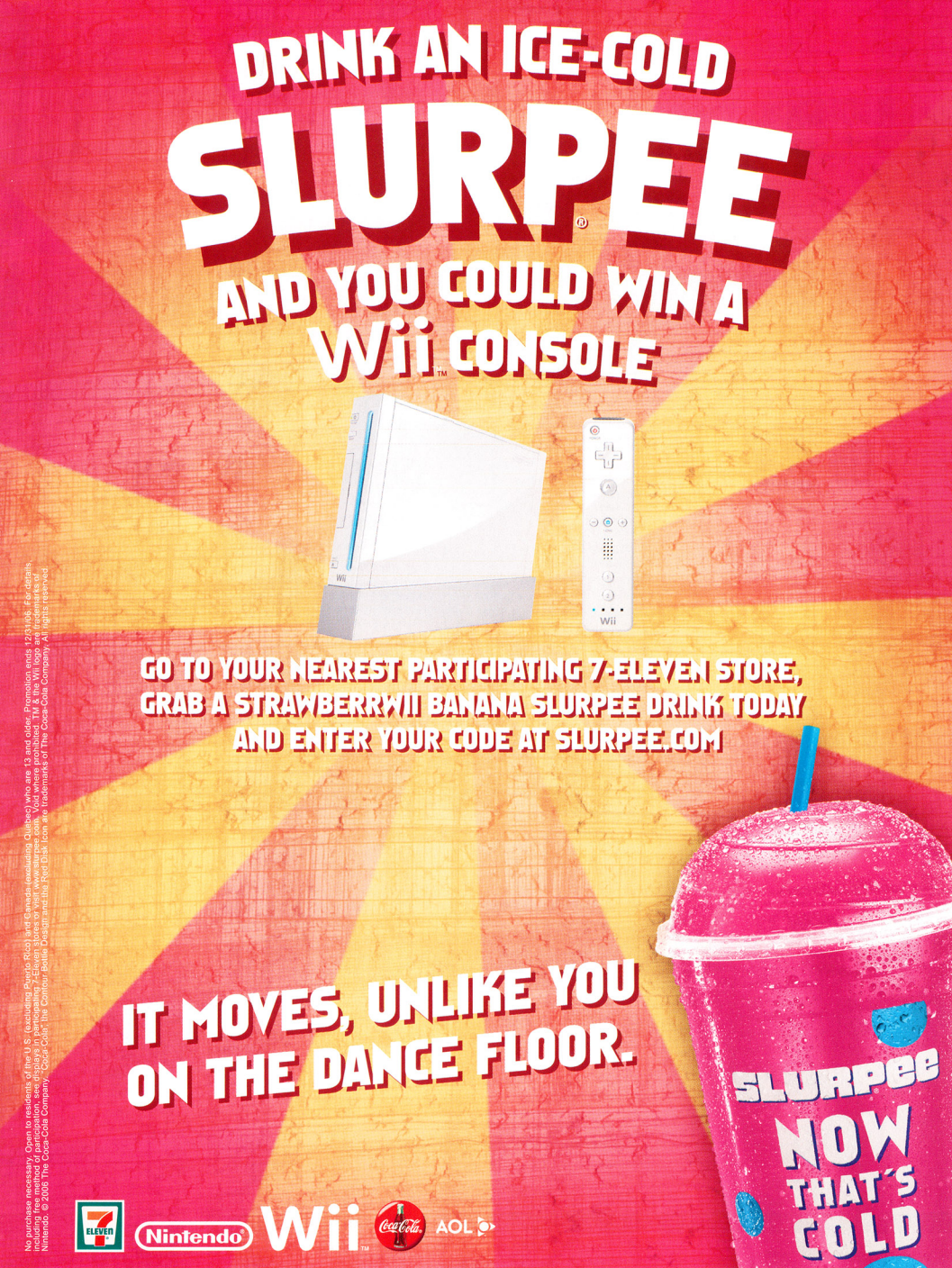
When working with a kid-friendly license, developers are too often content to slap the name on a cookie-cutter platformer and call it a day. So it's refreshing when a studio tries something different, especially when that something is so well-suited to a the franchise at hand. Such is the case with The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy, a free-for-all brawler based on an animated television series that's no stranger to slapstick violence. Reminiscent of Dreamcast classic Power Stone (or more recently, One Piece: Grand Battle), the fisticuffs are relatively simple, but interactive arenas filled with all manner of weapons, vehicles, and bizarre traps make for some frenetic beat-downs. The clean, stylized visuals are faithful to the show (albeit in 3-D), as is the wonderfully off-kilter sense of humor and frequent pop-culture references (including an appearance by a red big rig that bears a striking resemblance to a certain Autobot commander). Unfortunately, Billy & Mandy falters in a few key areas. The controls are a bit stiff, the character balance is way off, and the single-player modes grow tedious pretty quickly. Still, four-player battles can be a heck of a lot of fun, so it's worth a look if you and some friends are fans of the show. —**STEVE T.**

CHICKEN LITTLE: ACE IN ACTION

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **BUENA VISTA GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **DC STUDIOS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The Ace of Chicken Little: Ace in Action is the diminutive bird's action-film counterpart, a puffed-up rooster who travels through space with similarly exaggerated versions of duckling Abby and pig Runt. The DS version of the trio's adventures plays like old-school overhead shooter Robotron: 2084, in which the Control Pad is used for character movement and the A, B, X, and Y Buttons let you fire a blaster in eight directions. Instead of clearing out arenas, Ace powers through long sprawling corridors, eventually making his way to boss battles. To keep the action chaotic, robots beam in behind the hero, ensuring that he is surrounded at all times. The blasting can get a bit monotonous, especially when you just want to move forward. However, straight-ahead space-shooter levels with Abby at the controls of the Battle Barn and more corridor action with Runt in a tank (the Groundhog) do give the game some much-need variety. A bottom-screen radar display is not very useful, as the levels are linear, but accompanying touch-controlled icons that allow you to switch weapons on the fly do keep the action flowing. —**GEORGE S.**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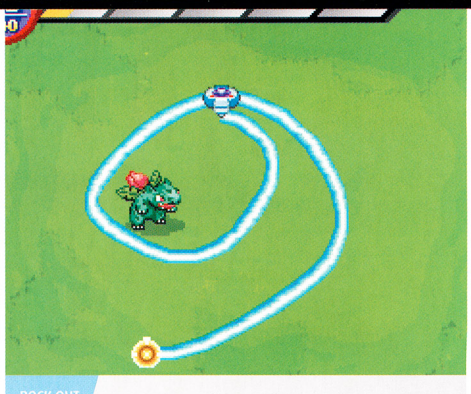


ROCK OUT

DOWNWARD SPIRAL

SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS: CREATURE FROM THE KRUSTY KRAB

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: BLITZ GAMES
ESRB: EVERYONE

After four good but formulaic GCN 3-D platformers, there was little reason to expect anything different from THQ's SpongeBob SquarePants series. However, Creature from the Krusty Krab comes as a pleasant surprise; it still involves a lot of hopping and attacking enemies, but its gameplay variety is stunning. You don't just run around and defeat enemies. You really feel like you're exploring the dream-worlds of the three main characters. SpongeBob races on a hot rod, flies on a plane through a giant worm, and freefalls into deep, dark holes while you try to keep him from hitting the sides. Patrick prances through a comic-book world as Starfishman and takes a journey through space. And, Plankton, at 100 times his normal size, runs on a 2-D track while fleeing from a giant hamburger. The play control is perfectly responsive, and the actions are plentiful. It's easy to navigate and blast through every level, too, so you cover a lot of ground, and feel like you're making a lot of progress, as you advance through the game's nine huge stages. The art style is a delight, as well, changing to fit the theme of each level. The Starfishman levels, for example, really look like the pages of a comic book. All told, Creature from the Krusty Krab is the most ambitious and most successful SpongeBob game to date. —GEORGE S.

FIFA 07

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
ESRB: EVERYONE

The depth of EA's excellent FIFA series is a tad intimidating. The yearly iterations always have tons of off-field options that let you create your own squad, cultivate talent, and participate in the daily business of running a club. If you really delve deep, you can start by being hired as a manager and work out every detail of team development. Recent years have brought us complex multiplayer choices, such as user-created tournaments and the FIFA Lounge, which allows you to manage matches among friends. With such innovations, you could spend hours in the game—setting up tournaments and formulating strategies—without ever actually hitting the pitch. Thankfully, Kick-Off mode gives you a quick way of setting up friendly matches with any of the hundreds of teams in the game's 30 real-life leagues. The franchise's '07 additions are a noticeable increase in crowd atmosphere (real club chants, cheers, and murmurs that reflect the action) and more-subtly detected improvements in passing and shooting. It's not that FIFA 07's gameplay isn't great. It's just that it was nearly perfect already. Particularly excellent are interactions between athletes as they battle for position to receive the ball when it's in the air. Tackles also feel natural. You can't go wrong with FIFA 07—but it may not be worth the upgrade if you have a recent version. —GEORGE S.

POKÉMON RANGER

RATING: 7.0

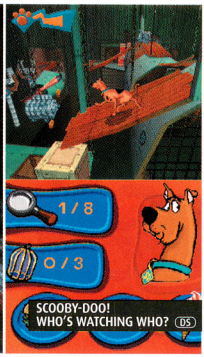
PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: GAME FREAK
ESRB: EVERYONE

The attempt to push the Pokémon franchise in new directions (which began with Pokémon Mystery Dungeon) continues in Pokémon Ranger, but the changes aren't all for the good. Although there are positive elements to Ranger, as well as plenty of things for the franchise to build on in the future, there are some serious flaws, too.

For the first true DS-centric Pokémon game, the developers have utilized the touch screen smartly. You can play through the whole adventure via just the stylus and the simple control scheme doesn't make the game feel unsophisticated. Using the stylus, you can quickly access your game statistics, interact with your Pokémon, then hop straight into battle; it's far easier than swapping between the traditional controls and the touch screen.

The heart of Pokémon Ranger is its unique battle system, in which you must circle Pokémon with the stylus as quickly as possible. It's an interesting aspect, but it gets repetitive quickly, as well as literally fatiguing. Pokémon fans will be disappointed with the lack of traditional Pokémon moves, as well. The use of Pokémon outside of battle is creative, but the game doesn't exploit the technique enough; you end up doing the same few moves over and over again. In fact, you'll use several techniques in the tutorial level that you likely won't employ for the rest of the story.

While newcomers to the series won't bat an eye at the catch-and-release nature of Ranger, long-time Pokémon fans will probably be uneasy with how Pokémon are used as disposable utensils for accomplishing your goals. Quite a few Pokémon are represented in Ranger, but nowhere near the complete roster, a concession that won't go unnoticed by Pokémaniacs. Pokémon veterans will also probably breeze through the comparatively light challenge Ranger provides, but newcomers to the franchise will enjoy the challenge. —CHRIS S.



NARUTO: NINJA COUNCIL 2

RATING: 5.5

PLATFORM: Game Boy Advance
PUBLISHER: Tomy/D3PA
DEVELOPER: Aspect
ESRB: Everyone 10+

Some of the situations in the side-scrolling beat-'em-up Naruto sequel require extremely well-executed maneuvers: double-jumping to and from moving platforms, teleporting at the right millisecond to avoid a boss's killer move, or defeating several dozen enemies who descend on you from every angle. Unfortunately, a lag in the controls makes it impossible to perform such intricate moves with regularity. It's as if the level designers didn't play the game, or at least not enough to realize that the game's mushy response to your button presses doesn't support the level of difficulty at which the jumping and fighting challenges are set. If you're enough of a Naruto fan to power past the built-in frustrations, however, you'll enjoy the ability to switch between ninjas-in-training Naruto, Sasuke, and Sakura, and you'll like the (modest) graphical improvements over the first Ninja Council title. You'll also find nuances in a game story that is too convoluted and confusing for someone who doesn't have the TV series committed to memory. Of course, you don't have to know the rich Naruto story to punch and kick enemies ad infinitum, but it would likely make the game more interesting if you had that perspective. —George S.

FLUSHED AWAY

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: Nintendo GameCube
PUBLISHER: D3PA
DEVELOPER: Monkey Bar Games
ESRB: Everyone

CG-movie-based games are a dime a dozen these days, but Flushed Away offers a unique twist: this one's actually fairly good. The developers of Flushed Away's platforming stages have clearly studied the best the genre has to offer, and they've created complex, well-designed levels that take advantage of your rodent protagonists' plentiful skills: double-jumping, wall-climbing, rope-swinging, hovering, rappelling via grappling hook, surfing on slippery pipes, sliding down zip lines, sidling around narrow ledges, and more. The simple melee combat is pretty fun too (especially since the enemies spout legitimately funny, if repetitive, quips when they perish), and all the bosses require interesting tactics to defeat. As long as Flushed Away focuses on platforming, it's a surprisingly enjoyable game—but whenever the action strays into broader territory the results are pretty dodgy. Vehicle stages are sluggish and underdeveloped, arbitrary minigames seem out of place and are too convoluted for their simplistic concepts, and the sandbox-style open-world area lacks anything interesting to do; the game's much better when it's on a linear path. If anything, Flushed Away suffers from being too ambitious, but there are many worse crimes a game can commit. —Chris H.

SCOOBY-DOO! WHO'S WATCHING WHO?

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: Nintendo DS
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Human Soft Inc.
ESRB: Everyone

Scooby-Doo and the Mystery, Inc. gang compete with rival sleuths the Ghost Scene Investigators in a five-episode adventure that runs the gamut from 3-D platforming to touch-controlled clue analysis. The platforming sections use a camera on a track, giving you zero control over rotation. The upshot is that you always move left or right to advance, or (on rare occasions) run directly into the scene (making jumping distances almost impossible to gauge) or toward the camera (allowing little warning when you are approaching danger). The levels look like scenes from the TV series, but some sections are much too busy, causing difficulty when you're trying to find your path in the clutter. Two scenes in which Scooby slides on a disc (similar to snowboarding) are selectable from the Options menu after you've played through them in the main story, as are five Mystery Machine-driving levels. The game's most entertaining activity is a chase that occurs at the end of each episode. Shaggy, Scooby in his arms, takes off with a suspect in pursuit. You use the stylus to give the beatnik a boost, clear obstacles (popping balloons, opening doors, etc.), and set traps for the pursuer. The scenes are a good incentive for getting through the more-frustrating and less-rewarding parts of the game. —George S.

4 CHARACTERS

SQUARE ENIX.

SOMEBODY CALL MY MANA

ONE NOTE IN NATURE

CHILDREN OF MANA

RATING: 6.5

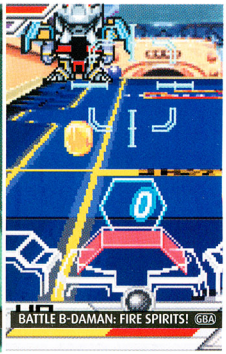
PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX/NEX ENTERTAINMENT
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

For all its lush graphics and naturalistic themes, Children of Mana really just boils down to hacking, slashing, and smashing everything in sight. As far as combat-driven action-RPGs go, COM has a lot going for it: four playable characters, four types of weapons (swords, flails, bows, and hammers) with primary and secondary attacks, lots of destructible objects, and nearly limitless customization possibilities thanks to a deep gem system. The 2-D hand-drawn visuals (including a few anime cut-scenes) are nothing short of gorgeous, and the action gets absolutely manic when you're swarmed by enemies. Things become even more interesting and intense when you're in four-player mode, especially when the game's "ricochet reaction" physics system kicks in; you, your friends, and your enemies bounce around like balls in a pinball machine after superpowerful hits. The boss battles are pretty cool as well.

Yet somehow I found myself wanting more. Chaotic multiplayer combat can be a lot of fun, but it can also wear thin before long. Other than the inclusion of new weapons, stronger enemies, and occasional environmental hazards, Children of Mana hardly changes over the course of its eight-dungeon quest; the first area feels remarkably similar to the last. Only a single town provides limited NPC interaction, and there aren't any puzzles to solve. If you're playing the game in single-player mode, you'll need to level up a lot if you want to get anywhere, which can get particularly tiresome. I give the developers credit for trying to alleviate this by including loads of optional side quests with pseudo-randomly generated levels, but when you encounter the same stage layout three times in an eight-stage dungeon, boredom sets in quickly.

Ever since the Mana series made its North American debut on the SNES in 1993, players have been waiting for a sequel that recaptures the same magic. Children of Mana doesn't fit that bill, but if you're looking for an action-oriented RPG—and you've got buddies looking for the same—it's worth checking out. —CHRIS H.

SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT GCN


BATTLE B-DAMAN: FIRE SPIRITS! GBA

SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT

RATING: 4.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL
ESRB: MATURE

I really did have high expectations for Double Agent; Ubisoft has been making some impressive games lately, the Splinter Cell franchise has always been solid, and the news leading up to the game's release had been very positive. But the Double Agent that we are now seeing is as profound a disappointment as I've seen in a while.

In one of the last games to make it to this hardware generation (not to mention in such a well-established genre and franchise), you'd expect to see the cumulative experience of the developers shine through. Instead, many aspects of Double Agent could be compared to the roughest titles of the early GameCube days. The in-game graphics exhibit blocky textures, poorly seamed environments, and clunky character modeling. The AI, a high-quality staple in the Splinter Cell series, has somehow taken a large step back, as well; the enemies vacillate between seeing you from 50 yards away as you lay motionless in deep shadow, and walking up to within touching distance of your scarcely concealed position, only to continue unabated on their patrol.

It's not all a wreck, thankfully, but Double Agent's shining moments are brief and add little in terms of game value. Occasional cinema scenes provide surprisingly stunning action sequences—a backhanded testament to the developers' ability to make something that looks really good. The story also has its moments, and the double-agent plot adjustments are often smartly done. But even these elements are weakened by sloppy mission creation that often depicts a rather minor part of the story just to fit into some preconceived level design.

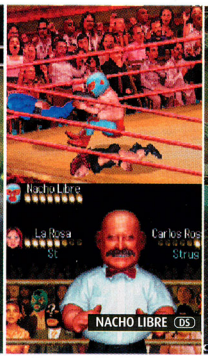
I'm looking forward to the great stuff Ubi has on the horizon, but looking past Double Agent. —CHRIS S.

BATTLE B-DAMAN: FIRE SPIRITS!

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: GAME BOY ADVANCE
PUBLISHER: ATLUS
DEVELOPER: TAKARA
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

We've had only a few months to savor the victory of young B-Daplayer Yamato in the B-Daman championships and, already, his adventures continue in Fire Spirits. The sequel's framework is identical to that of the original: Adventure sections play like cut-scenes with menu choices, and all of the real action takes place on the B-Daman playing field, where miniature robotlike devices fire steel balls at each other. As in the first game, the face-offs are far too easy, and B-Daman customization is still more superficial than useful, but new Strike Shots, which play into the plot, do offer explosive punctuation to the battles. Also, the addition of six minigames, scattered battle variants (such as Dark Battle mode, which places the rival B-Daman in the shadows until you score a hit), and Super Special Attacks afford the game more variety than the first title. The sequel has more fart jokes, too, in case you're into that sort of thing, and a story that fittingly builds on that of the original adventure. Battle B-Daman players who have exhausted the first game and crave more B-Dabattling will be satiated by the follow-up. —GEORGE S.



AVATAR: THE LAST AIRBENDER

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: THQ STUDIO AUSTRALIA
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

As button-mashing dungeon hacks based on animated series go, Avatar: The Last Airbender is above average. Though you can make your way through the overhead-view battler fairly mindlessly by following an arrow on an inset map and pressing the A Button repeatedly to attack enemies, a thorough player will find a good deal of depth under the surface. Airbender Aang's flying companion Momo sniffs out treasures in an ongoing side quest, scattered items enhance your party's stats, and element-energized attacks make skirmishes much less monotonous than they could be. A stealth maneuver (which lets you sneak past enemies) and obstacle-eliminating Focus moves (triggered by a simple rhythm game) add texture. Your party is made up of as many as four characters at once. Unfortunately, when they're bunched together it's difficult to tell which one you're controlling. The confusion clears up fairly quickly, however, since the enemies are no match for a full complement of heroes. Cartoon-quality cut-scenes, a story that introduces you to a world rich with detail, and an appealing collection of air-, water-, and earth-bending effects tie the game closely to the TV show. —GEORGE S.

NACHO LIBRE

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: MAJESCO
DEVELOPER: BUDCAT CREATIONS
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

I admit that I wasn't expecting much from Nacho Libre—games based on comedy flicks don't have the best track records—but beneath the intentionally goofy presentation, silly moves, and photo-cutout-style characters, there's actually a pretty good wrestling game. Nacho Libre offers plentiful moves and intuitive controls for its decent array of grapplers, and while some elements you'd expect in a lucha libre game (such as foreign objects and an abundance of high-flying maneuvers) are missing, the game stays faithful to its source material. Nacho Libre's story mode is surprisingly short, but it's packed with variety thanks to its nonlinearity and the inclusion of several stat-boosting minigames (though none of them are particularly fun). The game also offers a fair bit of replay value thanks to lots of unlockables and single-card multiplayer for up to four people. —CHRIS H.

ALSO THIS MONTH

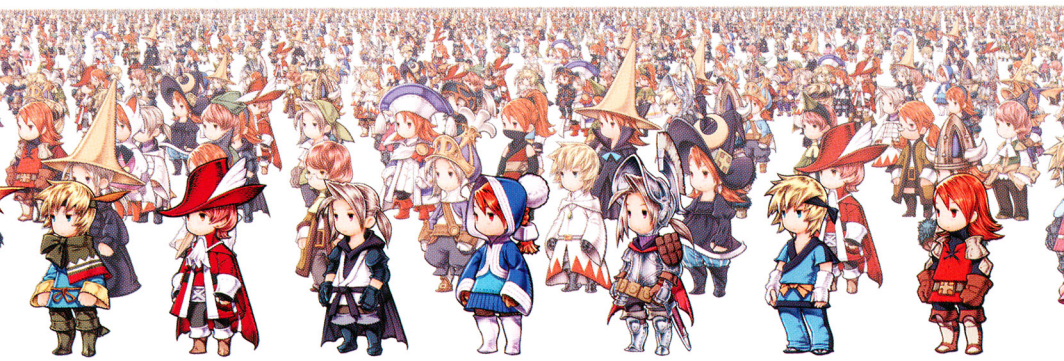
Though Hammy the squirrel gets top billing in **Over the Hedge: Hammy Goes Nuts** (DS and GBA), you can expect the whole animal crew to pitch in for the Activision game sequel. . . . EA's FIFA series keeps rolling along. In addition to the GCN version of **FIFA 07**, the series goes to the DS and GBA once again. . . . The girls with a passion for fashion are at it again in **Bratz: Forever Diamondz** (GCN, DS, and GBA) from THQ. This time, they're figure skating and adopting pets as they shop and accessorize. . . . Speaking of teens with attitude, Raven Symone continues her reign over Nintendo handhelds with Buena Vista's **That's So Raven: Psychic on the Scene** (DS). . . . If you want even more of the hero who lives in a pineapple under the sea, check out **SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab** (DS and GBA) from THQ. . . . The collection of Tim Allen movies that have been made into games is surprisingly paltry. The drought ends, however, with **The Santa Clause 3** (GBA) from Buena Vista. . . . Namco Bandai's **Mage Knight: Destiny's Soldier** brings the tabletop game to the DS, arcane rules and all. . . . We're reviewing the GCN and DS versions of THQ's **Avatar: The Last Airbender** this issue. A GBA version, which follows the adventures of Airbender Aang and his pals, is also available. **Tom and Jerry Tales** (DS and GBA) from Warner Bros. is based on the cat-and-mouse duo's latest TV series. The DS game is a series of chases with touch-activated obstacles. The GBA game combines simple platforming with minigames. . . . In addition to the GCN version of movie adaptation **Flushed Away** (reviewed this issue), the title is floating to the DS and GBA. . . . We're reviewing the DS version of **Tomb Raider: Legend** this issue. Next issue, we'll examine the GCN version. It's also due out for the GBA.

23 JOBS

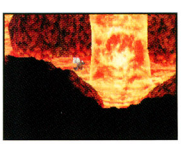
SQUARE ENIX.

279,

POSSIBLE PARTY



FOUR SOULS SHALL BE BLESSED WITH LIGHT, AND SO IT SHALL BEGIN...



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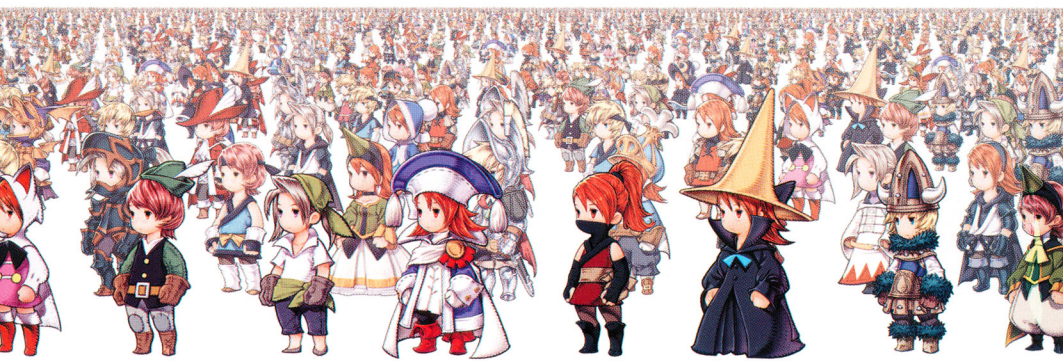

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[ARCHIVE]

TRIPLE PLAY

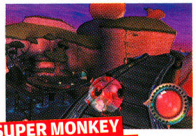
Though space issues kept us from printing full reviews of all three Nintendo-platform versions of Ubisoft's Open Season last month, the new Archive entries are among the most successful CG-movie adaptations to date. The GCN game shines by offering tons of gameplay variety (including an exceptional runaway-mine-car level), and the DS and GBA games give us two takes on sideview platforming, each with completely different levels. If you love the movie, any of the games would be worth checking out.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
2006 FIFA World Cup	7.5	Electronic Arts	204	E
American Chopper 2: Full Throttle	5.0	Activision	201	T
The Ant Bully	5.0	Midway	208	E10+
Barnyard	6.0	THQ	207	E10+
Baten Kaitos Origins	8.0	Nintendo	209	T
Bratz: Rock Angelz	N/A	THQ	198	E
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2	2.5	Activision	200	T
Cabela's Outdoor Adventures	6.5	Activision	198	T
Call of Duty 2: Big Red One	7.5	Activision	200	T
Cars	6.5	THQ	206	E
Chaos Field	6.0	0-3	200	E
Chibi-Robo	8.0	Nintendo	201	E10+
Chicken Little	6.0	Buena Vista	198	E10+
The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe	5.5	Buena Vista	199	T
Crash Tag Team Racing	7.0	Vivendi	198	E10+
Curious George	7.0	Namco	202	E
Dance Dance Revolution: Mario Mix	7.5	Nintendo	198	E
Dora the Explorer: Journey to the Purple Planet	N/A	Global Star	198	EC
FIFA Street 2	7.0	Electronic Arts	203	E
From Russia with Love	7.0	Electronic Arts	199	T
Gun	8.0, 8.5	Activision	199	M
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	8.5	Electronic Arts	199	E10+
Harvest Moon: Magical Melody	9.0,9.5	Natsume	203	E
Ice Age 2: The Meltdown	5.0	Vivendi	203	E10+
The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer	7.5	THQ	198	E10+
Kao the Kangaroo: Round 2	2.5	Atari	203	E
Karaoke Revolution Party	8.0	Konami	199	E10+
Kids Next Door: Operation V.I.D.E.O.G.A.M.E.	N/A	Global Star	198	E10+
The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning	5.5	Sierra	209	E10+
LEGO *Star Wars*	6.5	Eidos	198	E
LEGO *Star Wars* II: The Original Trilogy	7.5	LucasArts	209	E10+
Madden NFL 07	9.0	Electronic Arts	208	E
Major League Baseball 2K6	7.0, 6.5,6.0	2K Sports	205	E
Mario Party 7	7.5	Nintendo	199	E
Mark Davis: Pro Bass Challenge	5.0	Natsume	198	E
Mega Man X Collection	8.5	Capcom	200	E
Monster House	6.5	THQ	207	E10+
Naruto: Clash of Ninja	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	203	T
NBA Live 06	5.5	Electronic Arts	198	E
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	8.0	Electronic Arts	199	T
NHL 06	8.5	Electronic Arts	198	E10+
Nicktoons: Nicktoons Unite!	N/A	THQ	198	E
Odama	8.5	Nintendo	203	E10+
One Piece: Grand Adventure	5.5	Namco Bandai	208	T
One Piece: Pirates' Carnival	5.5	Namco Bandai	209	E
Open Season	8.0	Ubisoft	209	E10+
Over the Hedge	6.0	Activision	205	E10+
Pac-Man World 3	7.0	Namco	199	E
Pac-Man World Rally	5.5	Namco Bandai	208	E
Peter Jackson's King Kong	9.0	Ubisoft	200	T
Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones	9.0	Ubisoft	200	M
Rampage: Total Destruction	6.5	Midway	204	E10+
Shadow the Hedgehog	8.0	Sega	199	E10+

REVIEWER NOTES



SUPER MONKEY BALL ADVENTURE

What happened to Super Monkey Ball Adventure? A few months ago, the game was looking very promising—it has some great concepts to augment the traditional Monkey Ball gameplay—but the pieces completely failed to come together. The game structure is the worst offender; it's hard to tell what you're supposed to do next, there's no convenient way to retry missions, and sometimes you respawn in places you've never visited. The HUD is thoroughly confounding as well. —Chris H.

>CAPCOM CLASSICS MINI MIX

Weighing in at only three games, Capcom Classics Mini Mix isn't the most robust compilation out there, but it's hard to argue with Bionic Commando. If you've never played that particular NES masterpiece, you owe it to yourself to check it out.

—Steve T.

COOKING MAMA

WarioWare-style microgames mix with food preparation in Majesco's totally-touch-controlled pot boiler. You select a dish, then follow the directions to put it together: slicing, mixing, frying in timed events to earn a score. Poorly prepared meals are fixed by Mama, so you don't get to see the results of your mistakes. And, though you do unlock new recipes as you go along, an over-arching story would have been a big plus. I'd give this restaurant three stars. —George S.

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Shrek Superslam	N/A	Activision	199	E10+
The Sims 2	8.5	Electronic Arts	199	T
Sonic Riders	8.0	Sega	203	E
SSX On Tour	8.0	Electronic Arts	198	E10+
Super Mario Strikers	7.5	Nintendo	199	E
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	5.5	Nintendo	208	E
Teen Titans	6.0	Majesco	204	E10+
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3: Mutant Nightmare	4.0	Konami	199	E10+
Tony Hawk's American Wasteland	9.0	Activision	198	T
True Crime: New York City	8.0	Activision	199	M
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger: Night of the Quinkan	6.0	Activision	198	E10+
Ultimate Spider-Man	9.0	Activision	198	T
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	6.5	Capcom	199	T
World Series of Poker	4.5	Activision	198	E10+
X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse	7.5	Activision	198	T
X-Men: The Official Game	6.5	Activision	205	T
Zatch Bell!: Mamodo Battles	6.0	Bandai	198	T

NINTENDO DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
2006 FIFA World Cup	7.0	Electronic Arts	204	E
Age of Empires: The Age of Kings	8.0	Majesco	201	E10+
Alex Rider: Stormbreaker	4.5	THQ	208	T
• Animal Crossing: Wild World	9.5, 8.5	Nintendo	199	E
Battles of Prince of Persia	6.5	Ubisoft	200	E10+
Blades of Thunder 2	4.5	Summitsoft	201	E10+
Break 'Em All	7.0	D3PA	206	E
Bubble Bobble Revolution	6.0	Codemasters	208	E
Burnout Legends	N/A	Electronic Arts	199	E
Bust-a-Move DS	7.5	Majesco	200	E
Cars	5.5	THQ	206	E
The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe	7.0	Buena Vista	199	E10+
Clubhouse Games	7.0	Nintendo	209	E
Contact	6.5	Atlus	209	E10+
Cooking Mama	7.0	Majesco	209	E
Crash Boom Bang!	4.0	Sierra	209	E
Deep Labyrinth	6.0	Atlus	208	E10+
Dig Dug Digging Strike	7.0	Namco	198	E
Dino Master	5.5	Majesco	205	E
Disney's American Dragon: Jake Long—Attack of the Dark Dragon	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E
Dragon Ball Z: Supersonic Warriors 2	5.0	Atari	199	E10+
Dragon Booster	6.0	Konami	200	E
Dragon Quest Heroes: Rocket Slime	9.0	Square Enix	208	E
Electroplankton	8.5	Nintendo	200	E
Elf Bowling 1 & 2	N/A	Ignition	200	T
FIFA Soccer 06	8.0	Electronic Arts	198	E
FIFA Street 2	6.0	Electronic Arts	203	E
Finding Nemo: Escape to the Big Blue	5.0	THQ	202	E
Ford Racing 3	N/A	Destination	198	E
Franklin's Great Adventures	N/A	American Game Factory	200	E
Freedom Wings	6.0	Natsume	207	E10+
Golden Nugget Casino DS	6.5	Majesco	201	T
Greg Hastings' Tournament Paintball Max'd	N/A	Activision	201	E10+
Guilty Gear Dust Strikers	7.0	Majesco	204	T
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	8.0	Electronic Arts	199	E
Harvest Moon DS	6.0	Natsume	208	E
Hi Hi Puffy Amiyumi: The Genie and the Amp	4.5	D3PA	206	E10+
Ice Age 2: The Meltdown	4.0	Vivendi	203	E
The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer	5.5	THQ	199	E10+
Kim Possible: Kimmunicator	6.0	Buena Vista	198	E
Konductra	N/A	0-3	208	E
The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning	N/A	Sierra	209	E
LEGO *Star Wars* II: The Original Trilogy	4.5	LucasArts	209	E
• LostMagic	8.0, 7.0	Ubisoft	204	E
Madden NFL 07	7.5	Electronic Arts	208	E
Magnetica	8.0	Nintendo	205	E
Mario Hoops 3-on-3	7.5	Nintendo	209	E
• Mario Kart DS	9.0	Nintendo	199	E
Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time	9.0	Nintendo	199	E
Mario Vs. Donkey Kong 2: March of the Minis	7.5	Nintendo	209	E
Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects	5.0	Electronic Arts	198	E10+
MechAssault: Phantom War	8.0	Majesco	209	T
Mega Man Battle Network 5: Double Team DS	7.0	Capcom	198	E
Mega Man ZX	8.5	Capcom	208	E
• Metroid Prime Hunters	8.5, 8.0	Nintendo	203	T
Metroid Prime Pinball	9.5	Nintendo	198	E
Mini RC Rally	N/A	Summitsoft	204	E
Monopoly/Boggle/Battleship	7.0	Atari	200	E

Title	Score	Publisher	Vol.	ESRB
Monster House	5.5	THQ	207	E
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	6.0	Electronic Arts	199	E
New Super Mario Bros.	9.5,9.5,9.5,9.5	Nintendo	205	E
Nicktoons: Nicktoons Unite!	N/A	THQ	198	E
Open Season	N/A	Ubisoft	209	E
Over the Hedge	6.0	Activision	205	E
Pac-Man World 3	3.0	Namco	200	E
Peter Jackson's King Kong	3.5	Ubisoft	200	T
Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest	6.0	Buena Vista	206	T
Point Blank DS	6.0	Namco Bandai	206	E10+
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Blue Rescue Team	8.0	Nintendo	209	E
Pokémon Trozei	8.5	Nintendo	202	E
Rainbow Islands Revolution	4.5	Codemasters	208	E
Real Time Conflict: Shogun Empires	7.0	Namco	198	E10+
Resident Evil: Deadly Silence	8.5	Capcom	202	M
The Rub Rabbits!	8.0	Sega	201	T
SBK: Snowboard Kids	7.5	Atlus	199	E
Sega Casino	6.0	Sega	199	T
Shrek Superslam	N/A	Activision	199	E10+
The Sims 2	5.5	Electronic Arts	199	E10+
Snood 2: On Vacation	N/A	Destination	199	E
Sonic Rush	9.0	Sega	199	E
SpongeBob SquarePants: The Yellow Avenger	3.5	THQ	198	E
Spyro: Shadow Legacy	6.5	Vivendi	198	E
Star Fox Command	9.5	Nintendo	208	E10+
The Suite Life of Zack & Cody	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E
Super Black Bass Fishing	4.5	Majesco	204	E
Super Monkey Ball: Touch & Roll	6.5, 7.5	Sega	201	E
Super Princess Peach	7.5	Nintendo	202	E
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop	5.0	Bandai	201	E
Tao's Adventure: Curse of the Demon Seal	6.0	Konami	203	E
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3: Mutant Nightmare	6.0	Konami	198	E
Tenchu: Dark Secret	5.0	Nintendo	208	T
• Tetris DS	9.5	Nintendo	203	E
Texas Hold 'Em Poker DS	5.0	Majesco	198	E
Texas Hold 'Em Poker Pack	N/A	Summitsoft	200	E
• Tony Hawk's American SkBland	8.0	Activision	199	E
Top Gun	4.0	Mastiff	202	E10+
Top Spin 2	6.0	2K Games	200	E
Trauma Center: Under the Knife	9.0	Atlus	198	T
True Swing Golf	8.0	Nintendo	201	E
Ultimate Spider-Man	6.5	Activision	198	E10+
Viewtiful Joe: Double Trouble	7.0	Capcom	198	T
Worms: Open Warfare	7.0	THQ	202	E10+
X-Men: The Official Game	7.0	Activision	205	E10+
GAME BOY ADVANCE				
2006 FIFA World Cup	7.5	Electronic Arts	204	E
Alex Rider: Stormbreaker	N/A	THQ	208	E10+
The Ant Bully	N/A	Midway	208	E
Atomic Betty	N/A	Namco	198	E
ATV Quad Frenzy	N/A	Majesco	199	E
Babar to the Rescue	N/A	The Game Factory	206	E
Backyard Baseball 2007	3.5	Atari	204	E
Backyard Basketball 2007	N/A	Atari	209	E
Backyard Skateboarding	N/A	Atari	198	E
Barnyard	6.5	THQ	207	E
Battle B-Daman	6.5	Atlus	207	E
Big Mutha Truckers	N/A	Destination	199	E10+
Bionicle: Maze of Shadows	N/A	THQ	198	E
Bratz: Rock Angelz	N/A	THQ	198	E
Cabbage Patch Kids: The Patch Puppy Rescue	N/A	D3PA	204	E
Candy Land/Chutes & Ladders/ Memory	N/A	Destination	200	E
Capcom Classics Mini Mix	7.5	Capcom	209	T
Care Bears: Care Quest	N/A	The Game Factory	200	EC
Cars	6.5	THQ	206	E
Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance/ Aria of Sorrow Double Pack	9.0	Konami	202	T
Catz	N/A	Ubisoft	204	E
The Cheetah Girls	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E
Chicken Little	N/A	Buena Vista	198	E
Chicken Shoot	N/A	Destination	198	E10+
The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe	N/A	Buena Vista	199	E
Curious George	7.0	Namco	202	E
Disney's American Dragon: Jake Long— Rise of the Huntsclan	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E10+
Dogz	N/A	Ubisoft	199	E
Donkey Kong Country 3	8.0	Nintendo	198	E
Dr. Mario & Puzzle League	7.0	Nintendo	199	E
Dr. Sudoku	6.0	Mastiff	203	E
Dragon Ball: Advanced Adventure	7.0	Atari	203	E10+
Drill Dozer	9.0	Nintendo	201	E

>MECHASSAULT: PHANTOM WAR

Unlike the MechWarrior games of the '90s, MechAssault breaks from the rules of the original tabletop game and cranks up the giant-robot-battling action. Four-player battles are especially satisfying.

—George S.

SUMMON NIGHT: SWORDCRAFT STORY

For the most part, Summon Night is a solid RPG in the vein of games like Tales of Phantasia and Sword of Mana—they all couple an extensive story with nice, ornate graphics. The 2-D battle system in Summon Night is on the precipice of being really good, but the limited weapon selection and magic system let it down. Unfortunately, it doesn't sound like Summon Night's sequel fixes these problems, either. —Chris S.

>MARIO HOOPS 3-ON-3

I'm all for reducing the number of buttons for the sake of simplicity, but Mario Hoops 3-on-3 takes the notion a bit too far. It's aggravatingly easy to accidentally perform the wrong move at a critical time and lose the game.

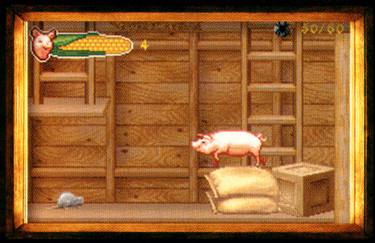
—Chris S.

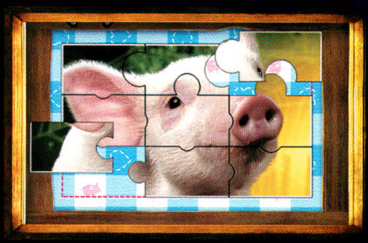
TRACE MEMORY

With DS titles in abundance these days, Trace Memory—a game that's over a year old—sticks out as one of the best offerings for the handheld. Not only does Trace Memory use the hardware to its fullest, it also manages to take players on a compelling journey. The game's only fault is that it is too short an experience. Hopefully the developer's follow-up title, Hotel Dusk: Room 215, will give players a bit more to chew on. —Andy M.

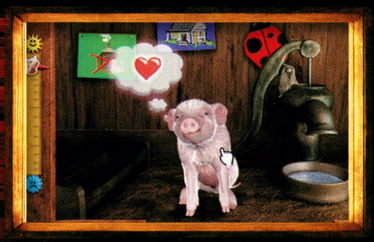
Title	Score	Publisher	Vol.	ESRB
Driv3r	5.5	Atari	198	T
Duel Masters: Shadow of the Code	5.5	Atari	198	E
Elf Bowling 1 & 2	N/A	Ignition	200	T
everGirl	N/A	THQ	198	E
The Fairly OddParents!: Clash with the Anti-World	N/A	THQ	199	E
FIFA Soccer 06	7.0	Electronic Arts	198	E
Final Fantasy IV Advance	9.0	Nintendo	200	E10+
Ford Racing 3	N/A	Destination	198	E
Franklin the Turtle	N/A	American Game Factory	200	EC
The Game of Life/Yahtzee/Payday	N/A	Destination	200	E
Games Explosion!	4.0	THQ	208	E
Garfield and His Nine Lives	5.0	American Game Factory	204	E
Garfield: The Search for Pooky	N/A	American Game Factory	200	E
Greg Hastings' Tournament Paintball Max'd	N/A	Activision	200	E10+
Gunstar Super Heroes	9.5	Sega	198	E10+
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	8.0	Electronic Arts	199	E
Hello Kitty: Happy Party Pals	N/A	THQ	199	E
Hi Hi Puffy Amiyumi: Kaznapped!	6.5	D3PA	199	E
Ice Age 2: The Meltdown	4.0	Vivendi	203	E
The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer	N/A	THQ	199	E
Koala Brothers: Outback Adventures	N/A	American Game Factory	200	EC
Kong: King of Atlantis	N/A	Majesco	200	E
Kong: The 8th Wonder of the World	6.0	Ubisoft	200	E10+
The Land Before Time: Into the Mysterious Beyond	N/A	American Game Factory	201	E
The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning	N/A	Sierra	209	E
LEGO *Star Wars* II: The Original Trilogy	N/A	LucasArts	209	E
Let's Ride! Dreamer	N/A	THQ	203	E
Madagascar: Operation Penguin	N/A	Activision	199	E
Madden NFL 07	7.0	Electronic Arts	208	E
Majesco's Sports Pack	N/A	Majesco	201	E10+
Mario Tennis: Power Tour	7.0	Nintendo	199	E
Mega Man Battle Network 6: Cybeast Gregar & Cybeast Falzar	7.5	Capcom	206	E
Mega Man Zero 4	8.5	Capcom	198	E
Miss Spider's Harvest Time Hop & Fly	N/A	The Game Factory	206	E
Monster House	5.0	THQ	207	E
Naruto: Ninja Council	4.0	Tomy/D3PA	203	E10+
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	N/A	Electronic Arts	199	E
Nicktoons: Nicktoons Unite!	N/A	THQ	198	E
The Nightmare Before Christmas: The Pumpkin King	6.5	Buena Vista	198	E10+
Open Season	N/A	Ubisoft	209	E
Operation/Mouse Trap/Simon	N/A	Destination	200	E
Over the Hedge	3.5	Activision	205	E
Paws & Claws Resort	N/A	THQ	203	E
Phil of the Future	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E
Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest	7.5	Buena Vista	206	E10+
Pocket Dogs	N/A	0–3	200	E
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Red Rescue Team	8.0	Nintendo	209	E
The Proud Family	N/A	Buena Vista	199	E
Rec Room Challenge	N/A	Majesco	200	E
Shrek Superslam	N/A	Activision	199	E10+
The Sims 2	7.5	Electronic Arts	199	E10+
Sky Dancers	N/A	Crave	199	E
Snood 2: On Vacation	N/A	Destination	199	E
SRS: Street Racing Syndicate	5.5	Destination	201	T
Sudoku Fever	4.0	Global Star	202	E
Sudoku Mania	N/A	UFO Interactive	206	E
Summon Night: Swordcraft Story	8.0	Atlus	207	E10+
Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation	6.5	Atlus	207	T
Tales of Phantasia	8.5	Nintendo	202	E10+
Teen Titans	6.0	Majesco	198	E10+
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Double Pack	N/A	Konami	206	E
Tony Hawk's American SkBland	6.0	Activision	199	E
Top Spin 2	N/A	2K Games	200	E
Totally Spies!	5.5	Atari	201	E
The Tower SP	7.0	Sega	203	E
Tringo	N/A	Crave	200	E
Trollz: Hair Affair	N/A	Ubisoft	199	E
Ultimate Arcade Games	N/A	Telegames	198	E
Ultimate Spider-Man	6.0	Activision	198	E10+
The Wild	N/A	Buena Vista	204	E
X-Men: The Official Game	3.5	Activision	205	E10+
Yu-Gi-Oh! GX Duel Academy	6.0	Konami	201	E
Yu-Gi-Oh! Ultimate Masters—World Championship Tournament 2006	6.0	Konami	204	E
Zatch Bell!: Electric Arena	N/A	Bandai	198	E10+

Charlotte's Web
EVERYONE
E
Mild Cartoon Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING
www.esrb.org
PC
CD-ROM
SOFTWARE





Get Tangled Up in the Fun!



Only in Theatres Christmas 2006

It's easy to get caught up in the adventure of this engaging video game! Based on the *Charlotte's Web* movie, you can play as Wilbur or Templeton as you solve challenges and meet other familiar characters along the way. It's an exciting journey filled with fun and discovery through 16 levels of romping, stomping, kick-up-your-heels fun!

GAME BOY ADVANCE

NINTENDO DS.

WALDEN MEDIA

K Entertainment Company

Nickelodeon movies

Paramount Pictures

SEGA
www.sega.com

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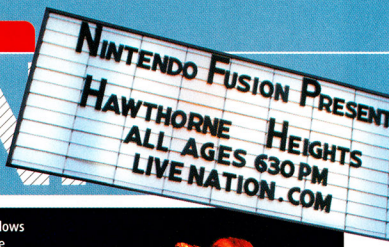


MUSIC

How Wii Rock

Wii™ hits the road with the bands of the Nintendo Fusion Tour, giving the general public its first chance to play the new-generation system.

The Nintendo Fusion Tour is a special event. All one has to do is look at the faces of concert-goers to understand that.

Some faces light up when chatting with their friends between bands, others sparkle when they see their favorite musicians onstage. Then there are the faces of Wii players: determined, surprised, confident, focused, and most of all, elated.

Although the Wii played second fiddle to the Fusion Tour's featured musicians Hawthorne Heights, Relient K, Emery, Plain White T's, and The Sleeping, there's little doubt Wii made an immediate impact on those who got their hands on the system's innovative controller.

"I thought it was awesome," said Joe Zizzo, drummer for The Sleeping, after playing the system before the show. "It's pretty mind-boggling. I had no idea it was like that. I'm stoked about it."

JT Woodruff, lead singer for Hawthorne Heights, got his hands on Wii Sports Boxing. "I was a little bit nervous because I'm not super-coordinated. I thought it was going to be hard to incorporate both hands, but I think it's really cool. I got into it. I'm a 28-year-old grown man, and I was really into boxing [bandmate] Eron [Bucciarelli]."

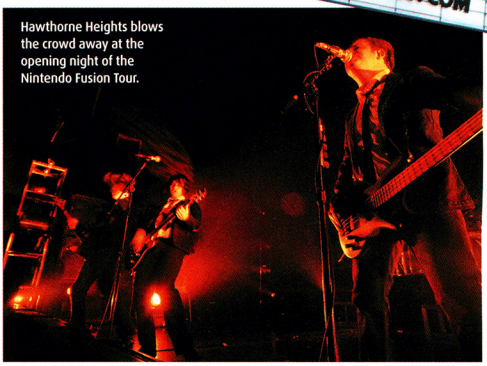
The concert-goers had an idea of what to expect from the musical performances, but when it came to the Wii, they were totally surprised.

Toni brought her son, Collin, to the show and came away with a lasting impression. "That's probably the first game platform where I've said to [Collin], 'I'm going to buy it for me.'"—**NOA RUFUS**

For more info, visit www.nintendofusiontour.com

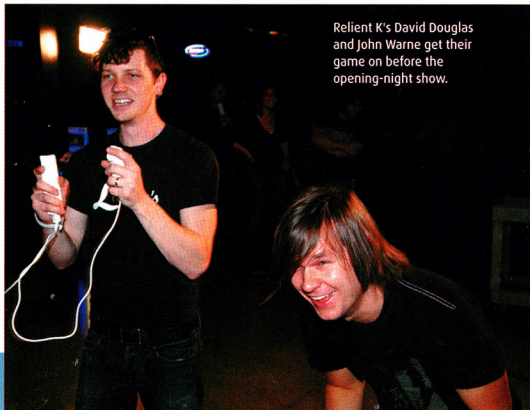
Yeah, they were into it.

Matt Redinour from Hawthorne Heights perfected his rock poses from years of practice.

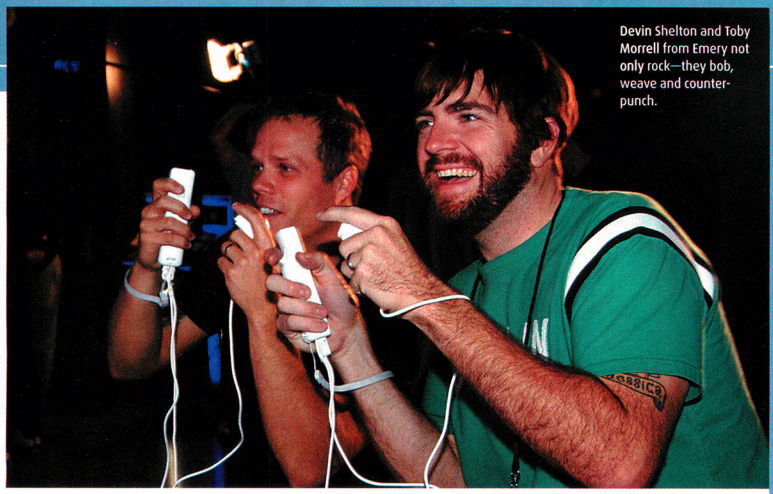


Hawthorne Heights blows the crowd away at the opening night of the Nintendo Fusion Tour.

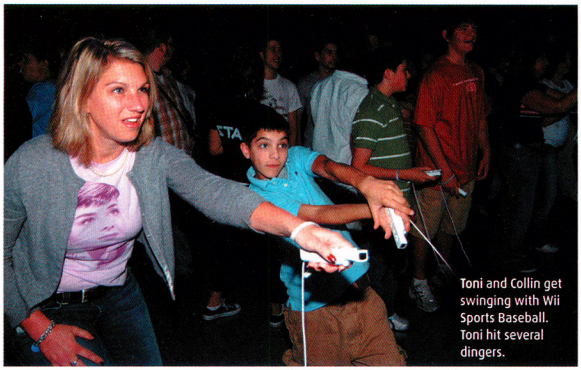
Casey Calvert of Hawthorne Heights rocks out by night, plays games by day.



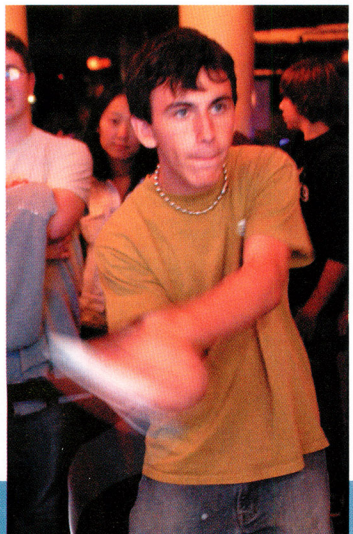
Relient K's David Douglas and John Warne get their game on before the opening-night show.

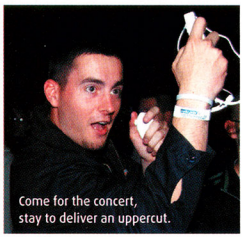


Devin Shelton and Toby Morrell from Emery not only rock—they bob, weave and counter-punch.



Toni and Collin get swinging with Wii Sports Baseball. Toni hit several dingers.





Come for the concert, stay to deliver an uppercut.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Plug in and geek out with the rest of the Nintendo community.

SHHHH. IT'S A SECRET. Nov. 17-24, 2006

Listen carefully, NP faithful. To commemorate the launch of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess for Wii on Nov. 19, Nintendo will be giving away a very special, very rare gift in Animal Crossing: Wild World. Be sure to connect to Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection during the week of Nov. 17th to Nov. 24th to receive a letter from Nintendo (which will show up in the mailbox near your home) and collect the attached item—you don't want to miss this one.

Wii 'TIL YOU DROP Nov. 15, 2006 to Jan. 13, 2007

Waiting for a chance to try out Wii for yourself? Well, come November 15th, you can. In collaboration with GameStop and Westfield Malls, Nintendo will be setting up kiosks in 25 locales across the US to give shoppers a chance to sample a handful of Wii titles. Check wii.nintendo.com for updates on locations.

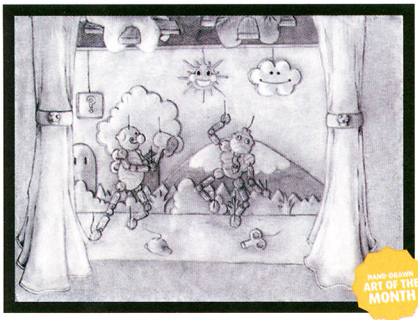
ART OF THE MONTH

March Musings

Mario and DK might be the most famous adversaries in video game history, but our winning artists view the storied rivalry in vastly different ways. It's not often we get great grayscale images, but the 3-D effects of Sassenfrathtastic's makes it a definite standout.

ARTIST: CHARLIEPIG88

SUBJECT: MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG 2



ARTIST: SASSENFRATHTASTIC

SUBJECT: MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG 2

Looking to submit art for the first time and not sure what to do? Visit **forums.nintendo.com** for details. Be sure to read the rules before you post your masterpieces.

Custom-Made Avatars **By Cory Conner**

NSider Reviews

This month we return to one of our reliable NSider Sages for insights into Fox McCloud's most recent epic journey.

NSider Review of the Month

Star Fox Command

reviewed by SHADOWLINK19

Fox McCloud and friends have finally made their first appearance on a handheld game system in the form of the Nintendo DS game Star Fox Command.

This game is controlled almost entirely by the touch screen. The stylus and touch screen are used to do just about everything in the game, from selecting different menu options to steering your Arwing in the various stages of the game. This control style can be a bit difficult when you first start playing, but after awhile it gets easier to use the controls, and quite fun to use.

Star Fox Command also has strategy game-style elements. During each mission, you will draw out a flight path for each character to follow. If you run into an enemy, you'll enter a battle with it. It's a pretty fun feature, but the time limit during these battles and turn limit for each mission can be frustrating sometimes.

Wi-Fi in Star Fox Command features two modes you can play: Free Battle and Battle Royale. As you play in matches in Battle Royale, your ranking will go up, but unfortunately, you can't choose which stage you play on or character you'll use. Also, during a Wi-Fi match, when one person disconnects from the game, the whole battle ends, which can be inconvenient since you won't be able to finish a battle if somebody disconnects.

Overall, Star Fox Command is a very fun DS title, and it can be hours of fun, whether you're playing Wi-Fi or single-player. Even though there are some minor flaws, that doesn't stop it from being a great game.

Let your voice be heard!

If you'd like to submit a review for NP, first become an Nsider at Nintendo.com. Then head to the Reviews forum and submit your game critique. Reviews are selected based on overall writing quality, objectivity, and game knowledge.

GOT THAT SPECIAL SOMETHING THAT BELONGS IN THE COMMUNITY SECTION? DROP US A LINE AT COMMUNITY@NINTENDOPOWER.COM.

POKéMON

Shocker!

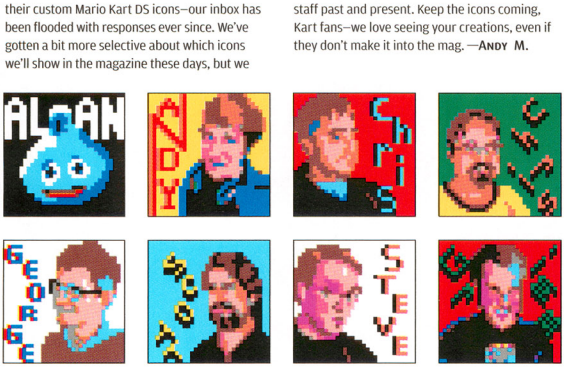
To commemorate the 10th anniversary of Pokémon, Macy's department store is unveiling a brand-new Pikachu balloon for the 2006 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. The original Pikachu balloon (seen on the right) has been a part of the annual holiday spectacular for the past five years, but this year the giant Pokémon will appear more electrifying than ever.

—CHRIS S.

ART

Pixelated Portraits

In issue 200, we asked our readers to send us their custom Mario Kart DS icons—our inbox has been flooded with responses ever since. We've gotten a bit more selective about which icons we'll show in the magazine these days, but we couldn't pass up Matthew K.'s tribute to the NP staff past and present. Keep the icons coming, Kart fans—we love seeing your creations, even if they don't make it into the mag. —**Andy M.**



A lot of you have asked how you can send us your Mario Kart DS icons. The easiest way is to take a photo of your DS screen with the lights out, then email it to wifi_community@nintendopower.com.

FOOD

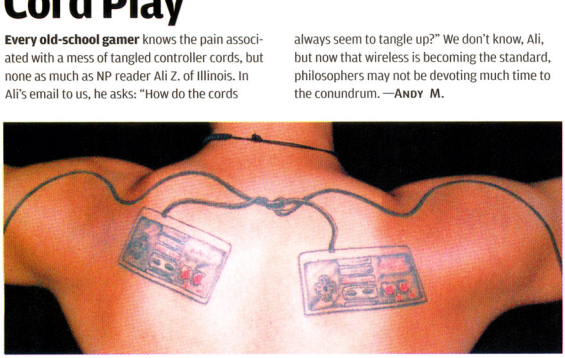
Cookin' Mama

Ever wish your mom were into videogames? Maybe that's asking a lot, but Igor A.'s mom, Denise, cares enough about her son's favorite pastime to commorate it in the form of a sweet birthday cake. We've seen a lot of Nintendo-themed baked goods, but we must say that this one takes the cake. Get it? Cake?
—**Andy M.**

TATTOOS

Cord Play

Every old-school gamer knows the pain associated with a mess of tangled controller cords, but none as much as NP reader Ali Z. of Illinois. In Ali's email to us, he asks: "How do the cords always seem to tangle up?" We don't know, Ali, but now that wireless is becoming the standard, philosophers may not be devoting much time to the conundrum. —**Andy M.**



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SCHOOL OF COMPUTER ANIMATION > DIGITAL ARTS & DESIGN > ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS > FILM > GAME DEVELOPMENT > RECORDING ARTS > SHOW PRODUCTION & TOURING

SPOT CHECK

Can you say, "No!" to this puppy? If not, you may be facing a doggie disaster of unimaginable proportions. Lucky for all concerned, Nintendo has a solution. By Scott Pelland

Some dogs are just too cute for their own good.

What is it about Dalmatians that makes people go all gooey-hearted and soft-headed? It could be the spots—people seem to go gaga for lady bugs too—but generally we want to get rid of spots, a sentiment most puppy owners know all too well. Or maybe it's the firefighting association. Talk about a noble cause! (I'm not sure how Dalmatians actually help fight fires, although I suspect it has something to do with sniffing out the nearest fire hydrant.) Or maybe it's simply a reaction to Cruella's De Vil's evil plots. But whatever the reason is for mass Dalmatian mania, the upshot is that untold numbers of Dalmatian puppies are sold every holiday season to people who aren't ready to take on the full responsibilities of dog ownership. These fair weather owners often tire of their pups after a few months and send them packing. Sadly, the pups often end up scraping by with menial jobs modeling for Rorschach inkblots or testing spot removers. In other words, some dogs are just too cute for their own good! Fortunately, Nintendo is doing something about it. This month's release of Nintendogs Dalmatian & Friends for DS lets you strike a blow against the injustice. Instead of buying a real dog this holiday season, you can explore the joys of virtual Dalmatian ownership, joining more than 2.3 million Nintendogs owners in North America who have discovered that puppy love doesn't have to include fleas, chewed-up sofas, scooper bags, and moments of embarrassingly affectionate leg-hugging. Every time you scratch your digital Spot's head and say, "Sit," what you're really saying is "No" to sad, unwanted, and unloved puppies. Dalmatians deserve a better future. And you deserve a pet who doesn't pee on your shoes.

Because the Andersons play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they **bring home the right ones.** This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Next, everyone gets a controller. Finally, the **kids win.** This quality time is presented by the **ESRB.**
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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www.ESRB.org

January 2007 Vol. 211

NEXT MONTH

You'll get our next issue about the same time Wii launches. Talk about a great week for Nintendo enthusiasts!

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess is finally emerging, along with the Wii console. We'll shed light on the game's many mysteries.

MIGHTY MOUSER

Resilient hero Kirby has a stomach for adventure in Kirby: Squeak Squad. When a band of raucous rodents steals his dessert, he goes on a bad-guy-gobbling rampage. We'll serve up a tasty feature-sized preview.

Wii TSUNAMI

A monster wave of Wii titles is headed your way in 2007, starting with WarioWare: Smooth Moves. Our look at the next year will start with a preview of the microgame masterpiece.

HAPPY LANDINGS

You catch a lot of air in Wii rumbler Excite Truck. We'll prepare you to hit the ground running with nitro-fueled strategy tips.

CONTACTS

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To contact the ESRB or for more information, visit www.esrb.org.
The Entertainment Software Rating Board evaluates each game's content and assigns one of the following ratings to reflect the appropriate age group for the game.

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Mature (17+)

Adult (18+)

Rating Pending

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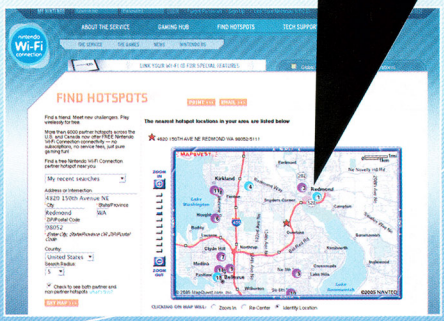
nintendo Wi-Fi connection

GAMING ON THE GO

Want to find the hottest spots for gaming in town? We've got you covered.



Everything you need to know about finding Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection Hotspots is waiting for you at nintendowifi.com. Click on **Find Hotspots, enter your starting address,** then hit **Get Map.** All the Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection-compatible hotspots in that area will appear on a map. Click on individual hotspots to get more information. For stats, support, hotspots, and the latest news about Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection players and their scores, visit:

www.NintendoWiFi.com

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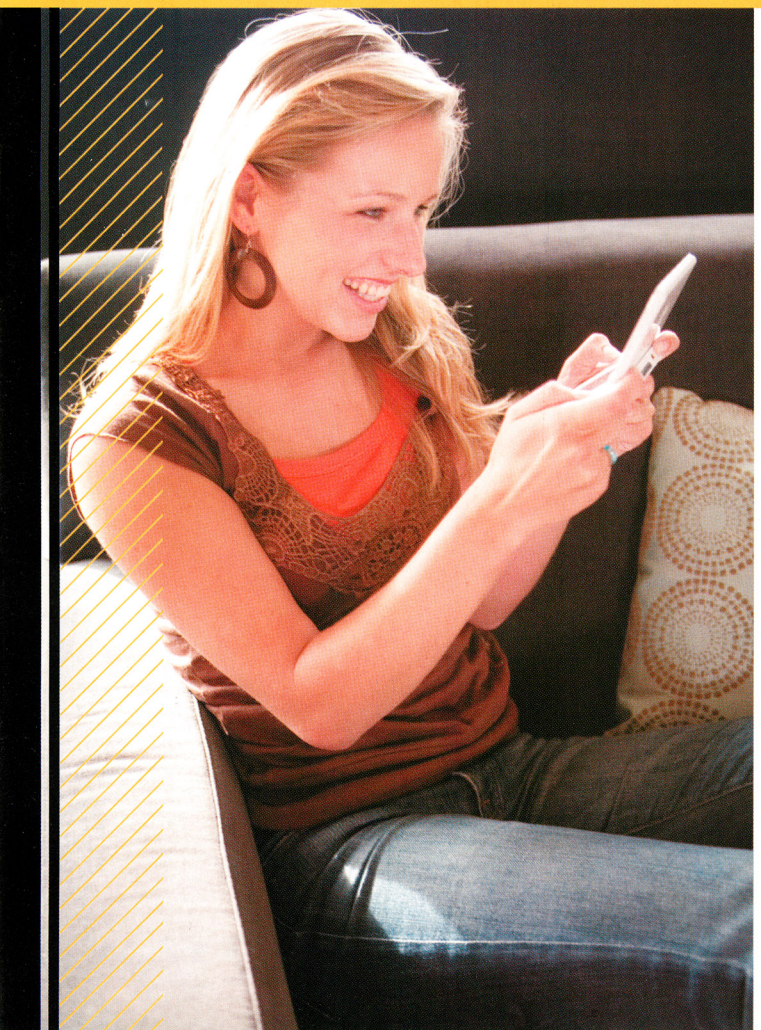

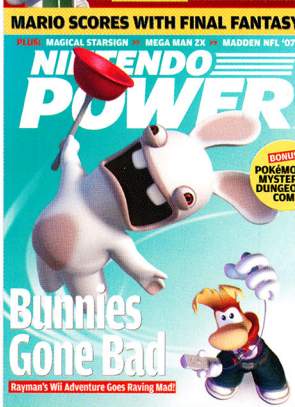

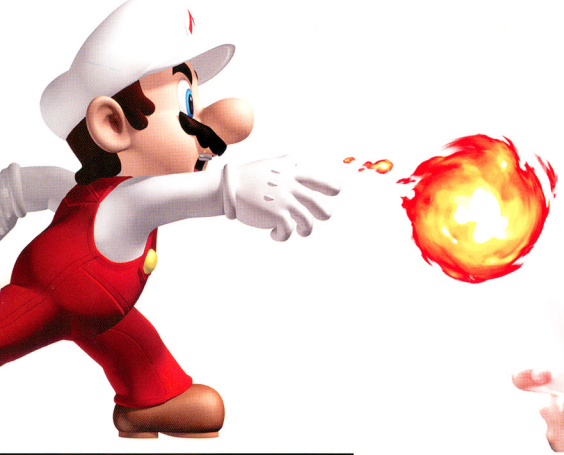

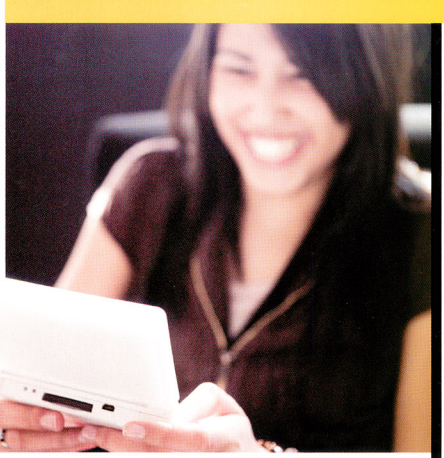

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